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# JOHANNINE THOUGHTS

MEDITATIONS  
IN PROSE AND VERSE SUGGESTED BY PASSAGES  
IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

BY

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Εβελασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μοι οἱ ἐν οὐς παρὰ  
πατρος, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

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## TO MY SISTER.

O Sister mine, to thee I look  
To read with loving eyes this book,  
And scan with thy pure thought the page  
Which holds the fruitage of my age,  
And, well remembering former times,  
Gladly forgive my simple rhymes.

Ah! Sister dear, how memory strays  
Back to those bright, those happy days  
When you and I together talked  
Of life's great problems, as we walked,  
And suns that glowed in vernal skies  
Bade young delight and hope arise.  
Yet grieve I not for those glad days,  
Nor wish to change the mellow rays  
Of autumn's sober sun for all  
Imagination can recall  
Of aspirations after truth,  
That lit the ardours of our youth.  
'Tis only outward pageants pass,  
Only the flesh that is as grass,  
And images within the soul  
Abide, nor fade, though years may roll.  
If passion dull its lurid fires,  
Then love with holier flame aspires;  
If faith less confident appear,  
Yet wider is its vision clear;  
If less our vehemence for right,  
Yet truer far is wisdom's light;  
And stronger than our frey scorn  
Our grief for those through sin forlorn.  
Our childhood's innocence may last  
When childhood's ignorance is past,  
And wonder burn within unspoiled  
When through the sciences we've toiled.  
Oh! childhood's glow is with us still;  
With childhood's trust, we fear no ill,

But, seeing all the world's dark side,  
We still, as then, in God abide.  
For us the mountain still is grand,  
And waves, that thunder on the strand ;  
The sky retains its lustrous blue,  
And flowers and grass their winsome hue.  
We will not count what days are fled,  
Nor strew dead leaves upon the dead,  
But see the all-pervading Life  
With every deadly thing at strife,  
And bringing from each weary hour  
Some access of the Spirit's power.  
Not dead, but conquerors of death,  
Not lost with this world's fleeting breath,  
The vanished whom our hearts still hold,  
And faith's confiding arms enfold.  
In God we live ; they live in God ;  
And we will tread the path they trod,  
Till eyes that close to things of earth  
Reopen in a wondrous birth.  
Oh ! sing we then, though sinks our day,  
A joyous and a thankful lay ;  
And, while we ponder memory's lore,  
With wings of hope we'll upward soar,  
Till we behold the unsetting sun,  
And past and future melt in one.

Go forth, my book, upon thy lowly way.  
 Within the stillness of some prayerful heart,  
 Or where pure love unbars the golden day,  
     May'st thou have part.

I dreamed I walked on Eden's dewy grass,  
 When silent night put on her crown of stars;  
 And heard a throng of singing angels pass  
     On radiant cars.

And Truth came sailing on her pinions white,  
 To my weak eyes all changed to rainbow hues,  
 And bade me quit the worldling's false delight,  
     Her way to choose.

'For I,' she said, 'have laid in thee a spark  
 Of sacred fire from mine own altar brought,  
 To guide thee safely through the mazes dark  
     By sin inwrought.

'The glow-worm's lamp, which sheds its tiny beams,  
 A lowly beacon through the gloom of night,  
 Is kindred to the starlit sky, whence gleams  
     A boundless light.

'So shines within, to guide thee in thy need,  
 Of God's own light a faint, but steadfast, ray,  
 Which, followed with unwavering trust, will lead  
     To perfect day.'

My dream dissolved; I saw around me spread  
 The common world, deformed with falsehood's stamp  
 But I have tried to follow where'er led  
     Truth's holy lamp.

Go forth, then, speak what I have seen and heard  
 When in faith's triumphs I have borne a part;  
 But oh! bring back some purifying word  
     To my own heart.

Oh ! purify my lips to speak,  
 Unto my Brethren, of thy love,  
 Imploring them in accents meek  
 To lift their wandering thoughts above.

Oh ! speak within my inmost heart,  
 And let me hear thy Word alone  
 That I from earth and self may part,  
 And all thy gracious Spirit own.

Then as a prophet on the mount,  
 Redeemed from doctrines false and low,  
 I'll call men to the living fount  
 Whence truth and love eternal flow

Thy Word is everlasting Life ;  
 Thy Spirit is enduring peace.  
 Subdue the world's unholy strife,  
 And bid our stormy passions cease.

Only in calm and prayerful days  
 Thy still, small voice is truly heard  
 Lead us in smooth and tranquil ways,  
 Till all men heed thy heavenly Word.

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## THE EVANGELIST.

It is becoming a frequent observation, on the part both of those who deny and of those who accept the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel, that it is an interpretation of a great life rather than a record of its historical details. This view alters profoundly the use which we make of the Gospel, and the historical becomes quite subordinate to the religious interest. We no longer expect to find the precise words and deeds of Jesus related with a simple view to accuracy in the narrative; but we look rather for the impression which Christ's life and teaching left upon the writer. This fact, however, by no means diminishes the interest of the book. In some biographies I think the most fascinating parts are those which record the impressions which the subjects of them made upon different minds; and this is especially the case when the outward events are of subordinate importance, and the quality of the soul which lived and thought and aspired in the midst of them is that which we most desire to know, and which alone clothes the events with significance and value. In the case of Christ the closing scenes are steeped in the pathos of a world's tragedy, and take their place permanently among the highest spiritual revelations; but the precise occasion on which he uttered any particular saying, the precise village where any particular incident occurred, are matters of minor importance, perhaps of no importance at all, to a man whose whole mind was absorbed in the contemplation of a spiritual glory which



had crossed his path. Such a man, it seems to me, was the writer of this Gospel, a man lost in his own thoughts, illumined by his own mystic vision, which obscured the dull and prosy outlines of material fact, and saw no value in the transient accidents of human life save so far as they became the expression or the symbol of eternal spiritual principles; and it may even have seemed to him quite natural to clothe in allegory truths which presented themselves to his own mind in the pictorial dress of the imagination. That the impressions of such a soul should be profound, yet lacking in universality; that it should seize on certain aspects of the life which attracted it, while it omitted others which did not appeal to its peculiar sensibilities, can occasion no surprise; for even love, when it has sprung out of some intense and harrowing experience of the soul, cannot widen its range so as to discern all that is clear to a less profound, but more evenly balanced, mind. Accordingly this writer, while he dwells on love of the brethren, on the love of the disciples one to another, has no word about loving one's enemies and persecutors; and while he plunges into the depths of the soul's mystic communion with God, and explores some of the most hidden recesses of the spiritual life, he says nothing of the beautiful parables with their simple appeal to ordinary men, and little of those touches of gracious human kindness which abound in the other Gospels. It is owing to this fact that the book is so differently regarded, and that, while some find ever fresh sources of strength and illumination in its pages, others, who have no sympathy with the writer's peculiar temperament, can discover nothing worthy of admiration in his work. To them it is a piece of arid theology, borrowed from the degenerate philosophy of Alexandria, and serving only to corrupt the pure sources of Christianity; and they are unable to see, what one would suppose its history had sufficiently proved, that it is at least one of the world's great master-pieces of spiritual genius, and that its pages are glowing with the vivid fires of religious feeling and experience.

This leads us to look a little more closely into the personality of the writer. A book which is an interpretation of a life necessarily sheds a revealing light upon the history of the author's mind ; but while the interpretation has been amply dwelt upon, little has been said about the hidden personality whose impressions are recorded. The author presents a marked contrast, in the matter of self-revelation, to the Apostle Paul. The latter pours out his whole heart in his letters, and allows us to see the warmth of his feelings and the alternations of his moods without any attempt at concealment. But the writer of the Gospel hides himself behind a veil, and even in his first Epistle gives us little insight into his personal relations. Nevertheless, from the character of his work, from the themes which he selects, from his manner of expression, I think we may learn something of the inner forces of his life, and of the spiritual crises through which he passed. I will attempt to draw forth some leading characteristics which the writings themselves appear to reveal, and thus furnish at least some broad and suggestive lines of portraiture.

I have already referred to the author's mystical temperament, which lent its own colour to every object on which he gazed. We can hardly doubt that heaven was round about him in his infancy, and that the glory of earth and sky brought to him feelings of a Divine and all-pervading Presence, long before thought, the great interpreter, wakened in his mind, and, dissatisfied with conventional answers to all its deep questions, found for itself a mode of statement which has laid such a lasting impress upon Christian theology. He might have said, in the words of a poet of a far later age :

' A learned and a happy ignorance  
 Divided me  
 From all the vanity,  
 From all the sloth, care, pain, and sorrow that advance  
 The madness and the misery  
 Of men. No error, no distraction I  
 Saw soil the earth or overcloud the sky.

## The Evangelist

I knew not that there was a serpent's sting  
 Whose poison shed  
 On men, did overspread  
 'The world; nor did I dream of such a thing  
 As sin, in which mankind lay dead.  
 They all were brisk and living wights to me,  
 Yea, pure and full of immortality.'<sup>1</sup>

But the mystical temperament is not necessarily all quietude, and childlike self-surrender to the higher vision. Nay, as it depends so much upon emotion, it may have its passionate struggles, its storms and lightnings. Do we not find indications that such was the case with our Evangelist? At times the feeling of this Apostle of love still leaps out into fiery expression,—‘Ye are from your father the devil, and the desires of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning.’ What fierce wrath against the persecutor; and yet how righteous and how true! Out of the very bosom of satan comes the spirit which, in obedience to an ecclesiastical system, pours scorn upon the healing words of righteousness, and slays the prophets of God; and this ardent disciple could not think with patience of the brutal murder of his adored Master, perpetrated, as such deeds always are, in the insulted names of justice and religion. Can we wonder that he transferred to God the indignation which in himself seemed to gush from so deep and pure a well, and maintained that on all who rejected the divine and unique Son the wrath of God abode? A statement like this, when frozen into a theology, may generate the very intolerance which the writer so vehemently condemns; but the case is altered when it leaps from the tortured feeling of one who remembered how his beloved Teacher had been done to death by the blind ferocity of an arrogant priesthood, and how that Teacher had seemed to stand alone against a sinful and defiant world, the one supreme and only Leader of the time into pure spiritual religion. Similar is his outbreak against the traitor Judas: ‘One of you is a devil’; ‘He was a thief

<sup>1</sup> Traherne.

and had the purse'; 'Satan entered into him.' So too, as he looked abroad upon the unbelieving world, he could see no redeeming light. It was the unrelieved empire of darkness, which sought to stifle Christian truth, and as he soared aloft into the cloudless sunlight of communion with God he could see no stars adorning the sable night of heathenism:—'We know that we are from God; and the whole world lies in the evil one.'

One other indication of his passionate nature may be noticed. He dwelt upon a sacred peace which the tribulations of the world could not interrupt. I must refer to this again when we come to the evening of his days. At present I would only remark that he who sighs for peace, and clasps it as a divine gift to his heart, has been abroad upon the vexed ocean of human desire, and endured the buffeting of its waves.

During the spontaneous life of childhood this passionate nature would not interfere with his vision of all things beautiful and good. But the time came when the spell of childhood was broken, when the law presented itself with its prescriptions of discipline and order, and the sordid motives and sinful ways of the world oppressed his heart, and changed his Eden into a desert. God was not apparent in the common life of men, and a dry conformity of outward act to the moral law could give little satisfaction to one who had wandered at large in heavenly pastures. His soul thirsted for God; but God seemed to have retired into the distant sky, and to be hidden behind the veil of sin which men, forgetful of their birth-right, had created. And then, whether, as has been generally believed, with the eyes of the flesh or only with the eyes of the spirit, he beheld in one Man a glory, as of an only son from a father, full of grace and truth. If, as I myself suppose, he was an immediate disciple of the Teacher, he failed fully to understand the meaning of that great life till it was withdrawn from earth; and even then, as I have said, he fixed his gaze so intently on certain grand aspects of it that he failed to see some of its more

beautiful and tender traits. The crucifixion, so entirely opposed to all their Messianic dreams, must have affected profoundly the thought of every disciple. But this one, more than most, was impressed with the vehemence of the hostility between the world and Christ, and with the strength of that love which willingly gave up life in the warfare against sin. Herein was love, and so we ought to love, and lay down our lives for the brethren. Love is life and light, and from the love in our hearts we know that we have passed out of death into life. This love was of the very essence of God, and the bond of a living communion between us and him ; and it was Christ who had declared it, and shown the reality of Divine Sonship and communion. Thus the spirit of his Lord became more and more clearly revealed to him as memory brought back the days of familiar intercourse, when he had not yet fully recognized the glory which he beheld. And now the faded vision of his early days returned with heightened colour and distincter outlines. The thought of God which had haunted his childish dreams had been revealed in a new and unexpected manner. The Word had become flesh. For my part, I would understand this quite literally ; as a declaration that the Divine Thought for huamnity had been stamped upon a human form, and was conveyed to men through that most perfect instrument of expression, the human organism. When a sculptor has conceived in his mind some ideal which he wishes to embody in a permanent work of art, and has hewn out of the shapeless block the image which has formed itself before the mental eye, his thought has become marble, and in gazing on the finished statue we see the soul of the artist ; and who is there that has not discerned in the sublime creations of the painter's skill, not only the artist's soul, but some word of God, the revealed ideal of human aspiration or trust or devotion printed upon the canvass by the touch of God ? So the disciple remembered the heavenly grace and expressiveness of a face illumined with spiritual light, and in that expression of holy love and communion he recog-

nized the ideal thought of Divine Sonship, and beheld the glory which had visited his early dreams. Thus the Word of God to man found its central power, no longer in the writings of prophets or the commandments of the law, but in a living soul, surrendered to the indwelling Father, and guided in all things by his blessed will. Herein was life, the eternal life which comes from the bosom of God, and which alone is the true light of men.

In this way a great change passed over the mind of the Evangelist. Things came to his remembrance with a new meaning. He had been born from above, born from God, or from the Spirit,—for he expresses himself in these various ways. Accordingly he insists on the necessity for re-birth. Without it, it is impossible to see the kingdom of God. That is no outward paradise which a man may enter by change of place. It is no earthly empire, which the violent can take by force. It is no ambitious church, of which men may become members by repeating a theological shibboleth, or by the payment of a subscription. But it is a spiritual frame of mind, which cannot be known except through a consciousness purified by the Spirit of God. That Spirit is love, so that he whose mind is darkened by hatred cannot see the kingdom where the Spirit reigns; and it is only when heavenly love re-creates the heart that the spiritual vision becomes clear, and the higher truth, not of the understanding, but of the just and pure soul, reveals itself. Was the disciple an elderly man when these things became apparent to him? We cannot be sure; but we can hardly help observing how, in the person of Nicodemus, he recognizes the possibilities of old age. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth. We cannot lay down rules for its action. If it may dwell in the heart of a child, where innocence still creates a paradise of God, it may also come to the aged, when the storms of life have spent their force, and the soft radiance of evening steals across the face. So it may have been with our visionary Evangelist, and the fiery dawn which attended his infant steps have changed, after the storm and stress

of life, into the tranquil splendours of his declining years.

At last he was at peace, the peace which Christ had left, a peace so unlike the satisfactions of the world, so calm, so true, so changeless. He had known the scorn and buffetings of men; in the world he had had tribulation; but one whom he loved had overcome the world, and destroyed its terror and its charm, and in him he had peace, the peace of an assured trust, the peace of a soul that moved among eternal things, and beheld at last with clear-eyed understanding the mystic vision which he had seen in the innocence of childhood, and lost in the noonday heats of life. He had known the struggle with sin, the fierce uprising of passion, surging with hot revolt against the ways of God; but One whom he had loved and mourned had come to abide in his heart, and calmed the tumult, and sweetened the bitterness, so that his self-will was gone, and he became conscious of the eternal love of the Father dwelling within. To that love his whole being bowed down; and he seemed beyond the reach of sin and death, for he who, through the power of faith, makes the Eternal his resting-place changes, but does not die; God dwelt in him, and he in God; the victory of faith was won, and his heart was at rest.

The ways of the mystic are not for all men, and especially those of the western world like to walk upon a level road, and have no higher ambition than to follow the lead of practical wisdom. To them the men who see visions and dream dreams are repellant, and the gaze of adoring love into the opened heavens makes no appeal. Yet surely it is good for us to look upon a mind which is cast in a different mould from ours, not with the astonished eyes of contempt, but with the intelligence of admiring sympathy. All such study widens our own range, and gives us a deeper insight into the possibilities of human nature. The history of a soul is always full of charm to every lover of his kind; and when that soul is one of the world's great seers, who tells us where he has found peace, the

only abiding peace which the soul can know, in the bosom of God, as the sharer of his eternal life, surely, if we are precluded by the character of our minds from understanding his words, we ought at least to listen with reverence to his voice, and go forth from his presence with chastened spirits. Our struggles and temptations, our doubts and fears, are not the same as his; but our goal is the same, harmony with God, the peace of an assured trust, communion with Him whose living Thought pervades creation, and dwells in the mind of man. And this we may attain, as he did, through the spirit of Christ, the beloved Son, whose deep consciousness of God has given sight to so many blind eyes, and life to so many deadened souls. May we behold his glory and be at rest.

## SOLILOQUY OF THE EVANGELIST IN HIS OLD AGE.

In memory's shrine clear visions rise before me  
How oft in childhood's hour  
I felt God's solemn presence bending o'er me,  
And marvelled at his power.  
And as I gazed upon the sunny hills,  
And heard the music of their thousand rills,  
Or sportively my feet did lave  
Within the Galilean wave,  
My soul, entranced, bowed down in wondering awe,  
And felt in each proud scene the grandeur of God's law.  
When conscience woke within, I missed the beauty  
That earth and sky adorns;  
Yet there inscribed I read the law of duty,  
And heard the voice which warns.  
But when I sought from passion's chain release,  
And longed, amid my storms, for heavenly peace,  
I seemed to pour my burning prayer  
Unheeded into empty air;  
For while the stars pursued their ordered way,  
Sin broke God's law in me, and clouded all my day.



And then I heard the Baptist's voice proclaiming  
Repentance unto life ;  
To Jordan's banks I turned my footsteps, aiming  
To heal my bitter strife.  
But e'en the holy rite brought no relief.  
My heart was wasted with consuming grief.  
For oh ! I longed to feel God near,  
In love that cast away my fear,  
To enter into that communion blest  
Where trusting souls abide, and find their perfect rest.

But as with slow and silent steps I wandered  
By Jordan's sacred stream,  
And on my loneliness of spirit pondered,  
Rapt in a wistful dream,  
I saw a face that bade my sorrow cease.  
It seemed a vision of eternal peace ;  
And yet it exercised such sway  
I could not turn my eyes away ;  
I felt, in that so well remembered hour,  
My heart restored to God by some resistless power.

And later, as he paced the shore, he knew me,  
And ' follow me,' he cried.  
I could not choose but follow, for he drew me  
With transport to his side.  
It seemed to me a banner was unfurled  
Which called to arms against an evil world.  
But while I hailed the battle's peal  
I was too full of earthly zeal,  
And though in simplest words he always taught,  
I failed to understand his pure and soaring thought.

But lowliness has come from tribulation ;  
And gently from above  
Descends the promised Spirit's revelation  
Of his unclouded love ;  
And I have lost the boastful dreams of earth

In the awakening dawn of heavenly birth.  
 Soft breathings of eternal life  
 Have lulled in peace my soul's sad strife.  
 In memory's pure scenes I love to trace  
 God's living word for man in that appealing face.

And now my aged years are fast declining  
 To guide me to the tomb;  
 But faith within my soul is clearly shining  
 To cheer me through its gloom.  
 Christ did not say that I should never die,  
 But wait his glorious coming from on high.  
 And he has come on wings of love,  
 Laden with blessings from above.  
 By faith he dwells within my trusting heart,  
 And from his wondrous love I never more can part.

## THE PROEM.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.

(In the beginning was Thought.)

Come, Thought eternal, speak a living word  
 Unto my soul, attentive to thy voice,  
 And raise my mind above this transient world  
 To those enduring heights, where justice sits  
 Enthroned, with love and truth and holiness.  
 Within the eternal Mind, eternal thou  
 Didst dwell, till chaos from its silence woke  
 Responsive to thy touch, and reasoned forms  
 Enchained primeval matter, and displayed  
 A universe of beauty and of love.  
 Without thee nought was made; but o'er the vault  
 With stars resplendent, whose ethereal light  
 Gleams on man's wondering eyes, the Father laid

Thy mighty impress; and each common weed,  
Each tiny insect, by the crowd despised,  
Bears in its lowly shape a thought divine.

At length came Man, within whose conscious breast  
A ray from thee, the one eternal light  
Of all that live, in pureness shone, as though  
Some hallowed altar kept a sacred fire.  
Thus was man raised to empyrean heights,  
And owned his birth Divine; and wheresoe'er  
Men listened to thy voice, and bent their will  
To thy command, through thy indwelling light  
They stood revealed God's sons. But darkness soon  
O'erspread the world, and selfishness and sin  
Obscured thy holy beam. Then thou didst turn  
To Israel's chosen land, and seek a home  
Amid a hallowed race of priests and kings.  
But even there the people would not hear  
Thy pleading tones. Rejected, thou didst send  
The prophets forth, to lift their trumpet voice  
In loud remonstrance, and with fiery zeal  
Bear witness to the light. And last of these  
Came John, who spoke with premonitions clear  
Of One to come, far mightier than himself,  
Who would baptize with spirit and with fire.

At length he came, of lowly birth, despised  
And by the world rejected; but a band  
Of humble men observed and felt the power  
Of kindling love and faith with which he taught.  
For in him thou, the eternal Word of truth,  
Who once didst grave thy precepts upon stone,  
Hadst become flesh; and they beheld with awe  
God's glory in a human face expressed.  
There justice sat revealed, and holiness,  
And rapt devotion, as of one who felt  
God's presence everywhere, within, around.  
But all in one expression were combined,  
A yearning love, which came in ceaseless stream  
From heaven's exhaustless fount, and poured itself

Forth on the world, to heal and bless mankind.  
There grace and truth shone star-like, from the eye,  
And trembled on the lips; and longing hearts,  
Oppressed with sin, or hardened by the world,  
Beheld, and wept, and rested in that love.  
And so his face in every line expressed  
The Son of God, the eternal Thought for man;  
And whosoe'er beheld the Son beheld  
The Father who had sent him, and whose love  
Had come in him to seek and save, and dwell  
In manifested form in this sad world.

'IN the beginning,' in the very origin of things. But when was this? Was there ever a beginning, as we understand beginning? Was there a fixed moment when God stepped forth, as it were, from eternal solitude, and for the first time looked upon a thought answering to himself? Or, as it is God's essence to create, has he been creating from eternity? And as thought, though the product of mind, is coeval with its parent, is the eternity of creation given in the eternity of the Creator? Here we enter depths which are beyond our understanding; yet it is wonderful that from our perishing moment, from our tiny station, we can look forth into the two infinities of time and space, and feel that there is some Reality that fills and comprehends them. The heart even of the child leaps up to this infinitude, and wanders with the beating wings of aspiration among the ancient stars, and feels that behind the everlasting process there is a reality which does not fleet. Thus in the far reach of our minds, passing in an instant to the remotest heavens, sinking into the abyss of by-gone days, there is already a link of communion between ourselves and God, and our finite souls are consciously folded in his infinite Being.

But can we know him only as eternal, as Creator? Surely he comes nearer to us, and speaks to those who will hear. However we may conceive the origin of things, in the beginning there was Thought. Matter, chance,

random and chaotic force, we know not, and, if we say they made the world, we only veil our ignorance under illusory words. But thought we know; for it dwells with us, and is in us. Yet thought is not, as the Stoics dreamed, the ultimate reality, than which there is nothing wider, nothing more mysterious. Our largest and widest thought is only an expression of the mind, which is greater than thought; and so the universal thought is dependent on that which is greater than itself, and serves but to express the infinite depth of Being. This Being, this ultimate Reality, we call God; and accordingly the cosmic Thought is the Word of God. To whom, then, was this Word first expressed? To whom but to God himself, even as a man may commune with his own heart, and become to himself an object of thought? Creation, prior to the appearance of rational beings, is a soliloquy of God, and the wondrous poem, if we may use such a figure, speaks back to the heart of the Creator, who sees that it is good.

But is this all-pervasive Thought which speaks from earth and sky other than God himself, as some fabric which our hands have reared is other than ourselves? We can only rearrange what God has made; but God had no prior creation to rearrange, and the mighty stream of rational force which constitutes the permanent laws of the universe is but the outflowing of his infinite power, and must be looked upon as God himself in the exercise of his creative Thought. Thus we may still say, with the pantheist, that we behold God in the expressive scenes of nature, and, when we hear his Word in the solemn music of creation, we hear himself; and yet we cannot say that God is this and nothing more. Thus far he reveals himself; but our reason peers into reaches of mystery that we cannot penetrate, and tells of other music that we cannot hear.

In the beginning, then, the Word was with God, and creation was God's soliloquy. Thus all things were made through thought, and without it no single thing. The power of thought in us is slowly tracing this out, and finding that of which it is itself the reflex, in the vast world which is

round about us. Long ago men perceived that the universe was one, and, like some great cathedral, was related in all its parts, and bore the stamp of one transcendent plan. We look upon the scene with other eyes, and measure magnitudes that the men of old dreamed not of; but we have not dissolved the unity of things; we can only gaze with ever enlarging wonder upon that cosmos which, when earth is still and dark, seems to look upon us as with the eyes of God, and to speak his boundless thought to our hearts. But in the smallest things that thought is no less present. The deadest matter is alive with Divine forces, constrained by the majesty of thought to play their part in the commonwealth of nature. We cannot handle a pebble that does not speak to us as with Divine lips, and command us to bow in adoration before the throne of God.

For God's Thought is not dead. Even a man's thought is alive, and in proportion to its life gives light. In the creative thought there was Life. The pulse of heat, the wavelets of light beat throughout the universe, and movements great and small spread a living beauty above and beneath. In our little planet plants, animals, men arose; and in man life became the conscious life of thought. In him alone could life in the higher sense find a dwelling; he alone could draw from the infinite fountains of Reason rills of that eternal Life which is found in the bosom of God, and he alone by guilty choice could refuse that measure which might be his. The Life was the Light of men. Eternal Reason hidden in the heart and directing our ways, the Word of God spoken to the conscience and throbbing forth in deeds of righteousness, is the Light by which we walk. To know more of Divine truth we need, not larger knowledge, but deeper life. Love can see when hatred is blind, and the untutored heart that feeds upon the Divine Word within has revelations that the wise and prudent know not of.

In the darkness of our sin and ignorance this Light is always shining, but we do not always see it. Thoughts

of love and peace our Father ever has towards us, and those who have once seen them know that they were always there. When we waken from the dream of self-will, and behold the love of God waiting for our devotion, it is not the dawning of a new light, but the discovery of the ancient light, of which we now remember many a tender gleam; as when we come to know and love a friend whom in the blindness of prejudice we have long misunderstood. So the heavens and the earth in the olden time were radiant with the Divine Thought that shines upon us to-day; but man's spiritual eye had not yet been opened, and the darkness of his savage nature could not apprehend the light.

How, then, was any Word of God to pierce to the centres of consciousness, and compel men to own its presence? Was it not through chosen messengers, who turned it into articulate voice, and thundered it into men's ears with warning and rebuke? The glorious company of prophets have described the heavenly vision from the mount of God, and have borne witness to the Light. The last of this company was John, a God-sent man, full of the spirit and power of Elijah, a mighty preacher of righteousness; and yet between him and Christ how great the contrast! The one was the child of Judaea, the other the Son of Man; and so John was not the Light, but bore witness of the Light, and the last of Israel's prophets still spoke of a mightier one to come, and strove to waken men's faith in a brighter future. With the prophet the Word still comes and goes. It is the prompting of some special command of righteousness, the flash of some particular truth; but it does not in its wholeness and beauty abide within his heart, as the formative principle of his being, and the perennial fountain of his words and deeds. How zealous we may be for God, while God dwells not within! How fierce may be our love of righteousness, while the holiness that heals is far distant! Speak, O prophets, and lift up your voice like a trumpet, to our listless ears. Sting our dead consciences into life by

the terrors of a judgment to come. But even Elijah, with his fiery chariot, can only drop upon his follower his prophet's mantle, and cannot be to us the heavenly Light, and dwell as a Spirit of Life within our life.

Yet the true Light was really present. The spark of Divine Reason gives light to every man. There is no soul to which God does not speak, and send some word of duty or of trust, of self-reproach or of hope. If we have ears to hear, how full are our lives of these holy and mysterious words! How deep within our spirits shines that tranquil light! When passion is quiet and the will surrendered, and we wait humbly upon God, we hear his voice, and know that it is he who leads us; but how few know the light, and follow it with confidence and love. The Thought of God that is in stars and flowers, on land and sea, is also in the world of men. Through Divine Thought that world was fashioned, with its family and public life, its governments and institutions, its various pursuits and balanced organism. In all that we can justly call civilization the Thought of God is apparent, and through the ages we can trace the unfolding of that Thought. But the world knew it not; the nations stumbled on, unconscious of the Divine Law by which the mighty process was controlled, and spoiling with many an ugly device the symmetry of the heavenly pattern. Nay, the very people to whom the World-Thought came through Law and Prophets, the people whom it claimed as its own, received it not. They stoned the living prophets, and buried the dead beneath dead mural honours, offering a decorated tomb for a purified heart. Yet there were exceptions. There were some who received the Word, not as the petrified badge of a self-righteous zeal, but as a quickening principle to make life beautiful, and bring the soul, through the mystic interchange of thought, into communion with Him who lays the impress of his thought on every soul that listens. And these became, not children of Israel, but children of God; for what is it to be a child of God but to be drawn up into his infinite life, and to bear the Divine Idea imprinted on



heart and will, and shining forth as with the light of transfiguration? • This is the result of faith, the absolute self-surrender of love and trust to Him who would stamp his own image on our earthly clay. Such men in the olden time reflected not the pride of lineage, nor owed their greatness to the accidents of human birth. They belong, not to a nation, but to the world. They were born of God. Thus they foreshadowed the realization of the underlying thought of all Hebrew history, and the melting of that which was highest in Israel's life into the life of humanity.

And so at last the Word became flesh. The Divine Thought that speaks to man, the highest Thought that man can reach as he climbs towards the knowledge of God, became part and parcel of that flesh which a false spiritualism has despised, but which is the very blossom of the material creation, the one incomparable organ of spiritual life and spiritual communication. Where can we *see* love and holiness but in the human face? Where can we *hear* tones that thrill the inmost chords of faith and devotion but in the human voice? The thought of an artist has become stone when the transfigured marble, in imitation of an ideal face, has been touched with the sublimity of heroism, or suffused with anguish, or made radiant with the exalted look of victory; and so the Divine Thought has become flesh in him whose life in the flesh was an expression of the eternal life of God, and irradiated an earthly body into a revealing light, to guide all who have eyes to see into the bosom of the Father. The Jews had said that the Wisdom which encircled the heaven and walked in the waves of the sea, and had a possession in every people and nation, had vainly sought for rest till it received its inheritance in Israel, and served in the holy tabernacle, and all its great qualities were none other than the 'Book of the Covenant of God most high, the Law which Moses commanded.'<sup>1</sup> But this making of the Word into parchment, though it was intended for life, turned into death. While men groped in the letter of the Law, the spirit

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xxiv.

escaped, and went its way, and prophecy ceased in Israel. But the Christian tabernacle is the flesh which enshrined the soul of Christ, and was the revealing organ of his heavenly life; and so, emancipated from the letter, we look beyond doctrine and precept into the soul from which they came, and we live by the power of the ever-living Spirit.

How, then, shall we describe the glory of this supreme manifestation of the Divine Thought in man except as the glory of an only son from a father? As a true son reflects the character and lineaments of his father, so it was the glory of God, the glory of his love and truth, that shone in Jesus Christ. All who received the Word had authority to become children of God; but Christ stands supreme and alone, being the one man who was chosen to fulfil the idea of Israel, and to imprint it upon the world. I know not the possibilities or the limitations of any man, and there is a mysterious element of infinity within us; but I know that by no effort of will, by no humble receiving of the Word, can I make myself a Christ, or even raise myself to a position where, with any sanity, I could be put in comparison with him. That short, lowly, suffering life has, through the indwelling of Divine power, laid a spell upon the world, which places it apart, and makes those who are not blind and deaf bow down in awe before the majesty of spiritual force at its highest. We are apt to forget the strength and the solitude of Christ because he is so full of grace and truth, dwelling so intimately in our hearts that we cannot think him far away, appealing so simply to what seems to be our natural judgment that we do not discern the depth of his wisdom. Yet what so wonderful as that age after age he should thus be the life within the life of countless thousands of men, and through this hidden power be slowly and steadfastly bringing to its realization the Divine Thought in the world?

Such was he who for a short time appeared among the disciples of John the Baptist. John recognized his chief, and soon felt that he who had followed had become, by nature's divine right, the master; and then his testimony

to the light became more definite, and pointed to him who was to be the Light of the world.

Now is all this the mere speculation of an idle and defunct philosophy? So far is it from this that it is simply an attempt to express the deepest realities of spiritual experience. Of Christ's fulness his disciples received, and grace upon grace. From that living fountain men have drunk age after age; and still it is full, and still the waters flow. We speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen, when we say that it is a mighty and redeeming power in the soul. Not in boastfulness would I say it, dear Lord, but in humility and thankfulness, making confession of that wonderful grace which found me in my darkness and sin. Unworthy, unworthy have I been; but the gifts of God are without repentance, and thy image has never vanished from my heart. Thy beseeching love has subdued me in my wickedness; thy peace has rebuked and calmed me amid wild and tumultuous passions; thy righteousness has tinted with its light the hues of conscience; my desire and prayer is to live in thy spirit. And all is of grace, grace that ceases not nor is weary. We are pressed no more by the hardness and curse of the Law; we aim no more at stern duty, proudly demanding its rewards; we tremble no more at a relentless retribution haunting our guilty steps. But grace and truth look in upon the struggling storm of our night, and woo us as with the tender beauty of a tranquil dawn; and so we grow peaceful in thy peace, and righteous in thy righteousness, and loving in thy love; and we lose the horror of past guilt, because we can think only of the wonderful love of God. 'For the unique Son, who is folded to the heart of God, has declared the light and love of Him whom, in the infinity of his being, none has ever seen.

*Χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἔν.*

O Nature, I have loved thee, and still love,  
And now would pour into thy patient ear

The homage of a devotee, whose soul  
Has long adored thee. Silently, with awe,  
In thy vast temple, have I own'd thy power,  
And, seeking some still shrine, where callous hearts  
Dared not intrude, with waiting love have bow'd  
In holy contemplation, and have felt  
Thine impress printing glorious images  
On this dull mind. And then emotion deep,  
Too deep for my poor utterance, has fill'd  
The lonely chambers of my heart, and raised  
An ecstasy of worship. Fain would I  
Have sung my hymn triumphant, as a lark  
Pours its ecstatic lay to kindling morn.  
But the expressive gift of poet's song  
Was still denied to me; the pleading look,  
The mute, glad face, were all I had to give.  
Still halts my speech; and yet my heart surcharged  
Must find relief or break. And, Nature, thou  
Wilt not disdain the artless utterance  
That speaks a soul sincere, but kindly lay  
Thine own soft, soothing hand on this sad brow,  
And whisper gently, as a mother breathes  
Low, lulling murmurs to her restless babe.

Far more than graceful forms and colours fair  
Have I discerned behind thy changing moods.  
These may unfold their gorgeous pageantry  
To brutish eyes, and touch no inner chord  
Of worship; for the grovelling mind, intent  
On earthly things, seeks not behind the veil,  
Nor ever dreams that mountain, wood, and sea  
Express a Greater than themselves, and sing  
A heavenly music to the heart devout.  
Thy forms may change, the evanescent surge  
Toss'd from the bosom of the ocean deep  
Of universal being: This gay frame  
Of earth and stars may shrivel like a scroll,  
And all the vivid play of energy  
Forget, as science dreams, its plastic power,

And, like a weary torrent, sink away,  
Diffused in one vast pool of stagnant heat.  
But yet the purity of moon and stars,  
The holiness that smooths the brow of night,  
The peace that whispers from the golden west  
On some still summer eve, the unity  
Which holds in chains ideal countless suns  
And systems, and the wisdom, beauty, love,  
Trembling in light, or warming in the glow  
That wakes to joyous life ten thousand worlds,—  
These shall not change or die ; eternal they  
As He whose being they express. For thou  
Art not, O Nature, the material dross  
Which tempers the too vivid ray, that else  
Would blast our vision ; rather dost thou dwell  
Within these forms, the interfused spirit  
Breathed from th' immortal majesty of heaven.

This have I seen from mountain heights of faith,  
And communed with thy life ; but shadows dim,  
Cast from the wayward will and sense-bound soul,  
Fall o'er the plain, and disenchant the world.  
Put forth thy magic touch, some piercing gleam  
Of light and warmth, to lift this heavy fold  
Of weeping mist, which hangs upon my heart  
And veils my eyes, obtruding dim and vast  
The near and earthly, while the far-off heaven,  
Eternal and immense, pours down its light,  
But through the cloud opaque discloses not  
Its pure and tranquil depths, and thus awakes  
Unanswer'd yearnings for a beauty loved  
But gone, remember'd, but not seen. Ev'n so  
Have I beheld a still, secluded tarn,  
Lone daughter of stern cliffs and wintry rains,  
With face, like purest mirror, still upturn'd  
To catch each heavenly ray ; but trailing mists,  
Forth from their mountain home, with stealthy feet  
Have crept, and bow'd themselves with tearful eyes  
And blinding tresses o'er the limpid pool.

Then shrub and stone, in the deceptive light,  
Loom'd large and strange, and in the ripple threw  
A troubled image. Yet beneath the fret  
That sigh'd to meet the vapour's chilly breath  
Methought I still could trace, in silent depths,  
A phantom beauty from the olden time,  
A reminiscence of diviner skies,  
A noon-day glory, or the starry gloom  
Of holy night. And still that lonely tarn  
Turn'd its pure face to greet the clearing heaven

Thus, on the ruffled surface of the mind,  
Beneath the veiling doubts of sense and sin,  
False images of earthly things assume  
A disproportioned grandeur, and appear  
To fill the total of existence known  
To man. But deeper than the surface fret  
The lone, imprison'd soul still palpitates  
With light ethereal, bearing traces dim  
Of things eternal, seen in happier hours.  
These would I trust, and though I cannot bind  
In chains austere of intellectual speech  
Their vague and phantom forms, which change and flit,  
The beauteous visions of a sunny dream,  
Yet would I look with fond and wistful gaze  
Where'er they point the way; for not from earth  
Have they been born, but from the open'd heaven  
In moments of communion high; and now  
They throng imagination's purest shrine  
With shapes ideal, bringing thus relief  
To cheer sick hope from memory's full store.

Oh! then, with face uplifted, and with heart  
Resign'd and still, wait I the coming warmth  
Which shall dissolve this cloud, and sudden show,  
Resplendent in eternal majesty  
And form unchanging, what I dimly feel.  
Oh! come that time, and bring to thirsty souls  
The full fruition of their life in God.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST.

‘VERILY I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.’ These are strong words of appreciation and affection from one who was greater than John. Of the outward life of the man on whom Jesus pronounced this high encomium we know very little, and with most of us his distinction is due, not to any recorded achievements, but to his association with Jesus himself. Nevertheless, his character stands out in bold relief on the pages of the Gospels. He was a man of heroic courage, who, at the cost of his life, rebuked a tyrant for a guilty deed ; one who spent a rigorous and ascetic life in his revolt from the vice and luxury of his day ; one who with prophetic fervour drew and swayed the multitudes, stimulating repentance for past sin, and kindling hopes of a reign of righteousness when the kingdom of God should be established in the world. These things exhibit the strength and zeal of his character, and place him among those whom the world commonly describes as great men. But the beautiful nature of this ‘man sent from God’ appears in the absolute simplicity and self-abnegation of his work. The great are apt to be moved by personal ambition, and have often betrayed an utter disregard of others’ rights, and sometimes exhibited a mean jealousy or envy and bitter hatred towards rivals ; and such feelings have too frequently appeared even among those who were ostensibly labouring for a good cause. But John was far above this paltry temper. The glory of his vision, the burden of his message, enthralled him ; and he looked with longing expectation for one mightier than himself, who would bring a holy spirit of life which had not yet been fully revealed. And when among his disciples appeared one with deep spiritual eyes and face of rapt devotion, this keen observer of men recognized and welcomed a greater, one who was naturally his chief, who from being his disciple had become his

leader,<sup>1</sup> and who, when his own fiery tongue was silent, would continue his work, and infuse into it that more heavenly spirit which he so ardently desired. Jesus evi-

<sup>1</sup>So I understand the saying ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν. The translation given by our Revisers is quite unintelligible. The usual interpretation is, 'He who is coming after me as the Messiah has come into the world before me as the pre-existent Logos, for as such he was really before me.' Thus the Baptist is made to anticipate the Christian theologians. The Greek, however (in spite of Origen, who refers it to the pre-existent humanity of Jesus), suggests a very different meaning. Ὀπίσω with ἐρχεσθαι or some similar expression is commonly used of one who follows as a disciple (see Matt. iv. 19, x. 38, xvi. 24; Mark i. 17, 20, viii. 34; Luke ix. 23, xiv. 27; John xii. 19; Acts v. 37, xx. 30; I Tim. v. 15. Compare I Mac. ii. 27, where Mattathias says Πᾶς ὁ ζηλῶν τῷ νόμῳ . . . ἐξελεύσεται ὀπίσω μου). Outside of the speeches of the Baptist ὀπίσω is used about thirty times in the New Testament, and ἔμπροσθεν more than forty times, and always in a local sense. Γέγονεν does not naturally suggest the notion of having come into the world. The expression literally means 'has got before me.' Compare John vi. 25, πότε ὦδε γέγονας; 'When did you get here?' Luke apparently was unwilling to use a phrase signifying discipleship, and accordingly omits ὀπίσω μου in the Gospel, and changes it into μετ' ἐμέ in Acts xiii. 25, and this, in accordance with the prevailing usage of the New Testament, must be understood in a temporal sense. But this very fact confirms our interpretation of ὀπίσω μου. The phrase πρῶτός μου is unusual. We may, however, compare Herodotus ix. 27, where the Athenians claim πρῶτοι εἶναι ἢ Ἀρκάδας, to be first in rank rather than the Arcadians, or, as Rawlinson renders it, 'to be preferred above Arcadians.' See also Philo, *De Mundi Opificio* 57, οὐδενὶ πρῶτον οἰκιοῦσθαι πέφυκεν ἢ ταύτῃ (sc. ἡδονῇ). And compare *De Abrahamo*, 46, πρεσβύτερος μὲν οὖν καὶ πρῶτος ἐστὶ τε καὶ λεγέσθω ὁ ἀστέιος. The past tense certainly does not exclude the sense of priority in rank; indeed this sense renders it necessary.—'He has got before me, because he was, all along, by reason of his great endowments, my superior, my chief.' See further John xv. 18, ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν, which perhaps may be rendered 'has hated me your chief' (or, 'as your chief,' there being no article). Πρῶτος in the sense of 'chief' is common: see Matt. xx. 27, xxii. 38; Mark vi. 21, ix. 35, x. 44; Luke xix. 47; Acts xiii. 50, xvii. 4, xxv. 2, xxviii. 7, 17.



dently had the gift, which has belonged to many great souls, of instantly attracting, and inspiring with complete confidence, those who were sympathetically inclined towards him. 'The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' subdued the Baptist himself, and drew away as enthusiastic followers some of the Baptist's disciples. But no tinge of bitterness or jealousy stained the purity of that noble heart. The greatness was indeed above him, and followed ways different from his own, so that he could not fully understand it; but he felt its power, and owned that it was given from heaven. His joy was fulfilled, as he said, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

This perfect freedom from jealousy, leading to the frank and glad recognition of one who would supplant him through the greater fulness of his Divine gifts, seems to have been that which most impressed the Evangelist in the character of the Baptist. Did he perhaps remember his own ambition to sit on the right hand or the left in the kingdom? For good men admire virtues in which they are themselves deficient, or which they have won only through hard labour and humbling experience. And it was this self-effacement, this entire devotion to the duty which God laid upon him, that gave the Baptist such truth of discernment. It was the single eye which gave light to his whole body, the simplicity and purity of heart which enabled him to see things as they really were. Not that he completely understood the man whose superiority he acknowledged. He felt the power and originality which seemed to mark out Jesus as the coming one; but their ways were different, and, though he could anticipate the advent of a new spiritual force in the world's affairs, he did not feel called upon to join the little band of disciples. It was his to be the herald of a higher order of religion, which he was not qualified by gift and temperament to enter.

We are not disciples of John; but we should do well to honour and to imitate his noble simplicity, which so entirely subordinated self to the righteousness which he pro-

claimed. Envy and jealousy are not confined to the great and ambitious, who may employ violence and stratagem to crush a rival. This mean spirit crawls through every rank in society, and is the source of much defamation and malicious innuendo. 'If we have any good cause at heart, we must unfeignedly rejoice when others are able to promote it more efficiently than we can do ;' otherwise we are loving ourselves more than the good cause. The same is true of every gift which we can legitimately prize ; we must see with pleasure its higher manifestations in another, for otherwise we are prizing, not the gift, but the glory which it brings us. Though not formally a disciple of Jesus, John was a better Christian than most of us ; for he had the simplicity of Christ, an entire forgetfulness of self in his devotion to God and goodness.

*Ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι.*

(He must increase, but I must decrease.)

Oh ! for the single eye, the simple heart,  
Which thou alone canst unto me impart,  
That, with no thought of self, I may fulfil  
All the behests of thy most holy will.

How sadly earthly aims and selfish greed  
Defile my thought, and, with my thought, my deed !  
How feebly love inspires and raises me !  
What vain desires draw down my heart from thee !

Father, from heaven send thy sacred flame,  
Till with pure lips I glorify thy name,  
Till in rapt vision I see thee alone,  
And self, redeemed, claims nothing as its own.

Oh ! may thy will to me be ever dear ;  
May perfect love cast out all selfish fear ;  
With Jesus let me bear the daily cross,  
And, in his spirit, count earth's glory dross.

Then shall I tread the world with hallowed feet;  
 And each new truth of thine with gladness greet,  
 And see at last, with pure and ravished sight  
 The splendours of thine own unclouded light.

~~In~~ connexion with John's frank recognition of the superiority of Jesus, and his intimation that the disciple who had got before him must be the promised Messiah,—a feature of the story which is confirmed by the report of John's message in Matthew and Luke,—our Evangelist records a remarkable and profound saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' This beautiful figure reveals the kind of impression which Jesus made by his simple presence. The lamb is an emblem of innocence and gentleness, as Spenser says :

'And by her in a line a milke-white lamb she lad.  
 So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,  
 She was in life and every vertuous lore.'

Innocence in a moral agent is not the mere negative absence of guilt, but reaches the positive rank of purity, or, higher still, of holiness. This holiness in himself and gentleness towards others marked Jesus out as God's own lamb, a man divine in purity and love, and therefore a 'beloved Son' of God. So much might well be apparent to the searching glance of sympathy and a prophet's power of reading the heart. But the succeeding words disclose a deeper insight, and give utterance to a grand truth. Holiness and gentleness are the redeeming powers of the world, and these two great powers have wrought in Christendom from that day to this. The men and women who have lifted the burden of the world's sin have always been the saints who have washed their robes white in the blood of the lamb, or, in less figurative language, have imbibed his spirit of holiness and gentleness, and with their own peace have lulled the storms of passion, and with their own purity have sweetened the fountains of life. The holiness of Christ awakens the sense of sin, while we see that that is the true life of man, and our own hearts look black against that

bright illumination. And then his gentleness saves us from despair. Were there nothing but condemnation and scorn, no sympathy, no tender pity, we could not bear that holiness, and could only abandon ourselves as lost. But when it comes with such soothing and loving accents, we are drawn within its folds, and purified in its purity. 'Thy gentleness has made me great.' The maxim of the world, and too often of the Church, has been that violence and revenge take away the sin of the world. But it is not so. They only harden and degrade, whereas love melts the heart, and gives a new and conquering motive in an answering love. In this soul-subduing love we recognize that which is heavenly and eternal. The Lamb of God manifests the holiness and the gentleness of God. And so our fear is cast out; and, lowly and contrite, we draw near, and are folded in the bosom of our Father, and receive the grace of sonship.

All holiness and gentleness work for the world's redemption within their appointed field. A refined and loving soul, though without the gifts that attract the attention of the world, takes away the sin of a home or a neighbourhood. But the power over men which we describe as greatness extends the influence more widely. The purity and gentleness of Jesus might have been hidden away in the little town of Nazareth, and have been an unseen ripple in the great ocean of the world's affairs. He was, however, not only the lamb of God, but, as he is described elsewhere, 'the lion of the tribe of Judah.' Like the monarch of the forest, he had strength. He had that power of command over men which, for good or evil, influences the world. His power was acknowledged and proved by the bitterness of his enemies; and when he was lifted up from the earth, he drew the eyes of nations, and became a beacon-light for succeeding centuries. And to this day his holiness and gentleness are the mightiest power that we know for taking away the sin of the world. It may still be long before the brute powers are dethroned, and the reign of humanity is established, but never was the rule of Christ's spirit higher

### 30 I stand at the door and knock'

than it is to-day. And as we think of this, we may sincerely honour the depth of insight in that great and humble man who read in the face of his disciple the secret of redemption, and rejoiced in the advent of spiritual gifts and a world-wide influence which he himself could not attain.

*Ὁ αἰρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Ἴδον ἔστηκα ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν καὶ κρούω.*

(He that taketh away sin. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.)

I love thee, Lord, for thou didst first love me,  
And didst a home in this poor mansion seek.  
I heard thy knock, and straight unbarred my heart,  
And listened wondering to thine accents meek.

I long had lived unknowing of thy love,  
And selfishness directed all my will ;  
The name of God was but a name to me,  
And earthly thoughts and aims enthralled me still.

Briers and thorns obstructed all approach,  
And tangled weeds lay rotting at the door ;  
But thou didst come, with bleeding hands and feet,  
And ask admittance to my sin-stained floor.

I saw thy love, I heard thy pleading voice ;  
Thy words of grace enkindled high desire ;  
And, led by thee, my Father I adored,  
And on me fell the Holy Spirit's fire.

I love thee, Lord, but oh ! how cold my love :  
Abide thou still within my trembling heart ;  
Lay thou on me the purifying cross,  
And let thy life within my life have part.

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In thee alone is life :  
Let that life quicken me,  
That I may rise above all worldly strife  
Through trust and charity.

Thou, O my God, art love :  
To know thee as thou art  
Oh ! let thy Spirit, like a gentle dove,  
Descend within my heart.

Destroy all hate and guile,  
All jealousy and pride ;  
Nor let me ever yield to passions vile,  
Whatever wrongs betide.

O Love, from this blest hour  
My heart to thee I give ;  
But grant that deeds may prove the Spirit's power :  
Then I shall truly live.

## NATHANAEL.

THE account of Nathanael, which ends with such a glorious prediction, is a little enigmatical in its details, and if we accept it as a genuine reminiscence, we are obliged to resort to conjecture for its full explanation. Why should Nathanael make such a strong declaration of his faith because he was seen under the fig tree ? It is sometimes assumed that he could not have been seen with the eyes of the flesh, and that therefore he recognized in Jesus a miraculous knowledge, or, as some say, even omniscience. There is, however, nothing in the narrative itself to suggest such an explanation. Nathanael might have thought that he had been concealed from observation ; but when Jesus said he had seen him, he could only accept the statement in its natural sense. We must consequently resort to conjecture of a different kind. The Greek order of words though leaving room for doubt, seems to imply that he was under the fig tree when Philip found him. Before that, the quick eye of Jesus had detected him. We may suppose that he was engaged in meditation and prayer, communing in some solitary place

with the Father who sees in secret. Jesus, who at a later time marked the generosity of the poor widow as she dropped her little contribution into the treasury, now noted the absence of that guile which led men to pray, or pretend to pray, at the corners of the streets, and to make themselves prominent in the synagogues. Hence his heart went out in sympathy towards this stranger, and he pronounced the strong eulogium, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' Nathanael was naturally surprised, and asked for an explanation; and when he found that this earnest and friendly language was used because he had been seen under the fig tree, the sympathy became mutual, and the two men knew each other through that mysterious mingling of soul with soul, whereby we sometimes come to know a stranger in a few minutes more intimately than some old acquaintance in as many years. Hence, he on his side, made a strong and sincere declaration, moved also, no doubt, by that deep personal impression which Philip evidently thought would be sufficient. The title 'Son of God' cannot be used here in a metaphysical sense, unless we attribute a miraculous knowledge to Nathanael, and at the same time a miserable bathos in descending to 'the king of Israel.' The latter expression, falling far below the real majesty of Jesus, was natural to one who was an Israelite indeed, who felt the regal power of the new teacher, but could not yet know the world-wide significance of the previous title. The reply of Jesus, if uttered quite gravely, is rather perplexing, as it seems to imply that Nathanael drew an argument from the fact referred to—'Here is a man who saw me under a fig tree: he must be the Son of God.' Faith, however, does not arise in this dry and formal manner; and Nathanael's must have been due to the mutual recognition of spiritual sympathy and insight. But if we suppose that the words of Jesus were said half playfully, the difficulty vanishes; and some change of tone seems implied by the added words, 'and he saith unto him,' introducing the solemn and sublime figure with which the incident closes. The same notion of playfulness may, I think, remove all difficulty from the

answer to the Syrophenician woman about the dogs. I believe that Jesus spoke with a sweet, inviting smile that at once secured the woman's confidence, and drew forth her witty and plaintive answer.

The glorious promise addressed to Nathanael, but through the plural ('Ye shall see') extended to others, describes in poetic phrase the farthest reach of Christian hope and experience, the open vision of God, and intimate communion between God and man. The figure is of course borrowed from Jacob's dream. The opened heaven signifies the Divine illumination that dispels the darkness of doubt and sin. The ascending angels are the aspirations and prayers that rise from the longing soul, and seek to penetrate the invisible shrine where dwells the eternal Spirit. The descending angels are the answers of peace and the gifts of grace that come from the Divine fulness to satisfy the waiting and receptive heart. 'The Son of Man' is no exclusive term; and if this exalted communion was given to Jesus with unexampled fulness and power, it was given to him as the representative man; and to all who are his the angels come, making the dull earth beautiful with their starry plumes, and whispering the glad message that man is a child of God, destined for a glory which eye has not seen nor ear heard. Alas! that our hearts are so gross, and our ears so dull of hearing. When the noise of passion is lulled, and the spirit is rapt in silent adoration, we catch the sound of angel footsteps and the sweet strains of heavenly music; but how soon we suffer ourselves to be deafened by the jangle of worldly and selfish interests. Would we retain the hearing ear and the seeing eye of the soul, we must renounce our self-will, and watch for the messengers of God, those angels of purity and love who are in truth God himself, revealed in the sanctuary within, and pleading with us in holy ideals, in softened feelings, and in longings for a changeless peace. 'How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!' 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.'



*"Οψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγμένον.*

The night came down, clad in her sable robe,  
 And lulling sleep breathed silence o'er the world.  
 It was the hour for meditation, calm  
 And lowly prayer, when all the heart attuned  
 To nature's stillness caught the far-off strains  
 Of heavenly music. O'er the darkened earth  
 Unnumbered stars poured down their gentle beams,  
 And drew on high my wondering gaze. Now lost  
 In silent adoration, I was raised  
 Up to the throne of God, with awe beheld  
 The mystic veil withdrawn, and then entranced,  
 Depth within depth beyond all mortal thought,  
 I looked on glories which no tongue may tell.  
 The rapture past, wherein the soul knew nought  
 But God alone, I saw as in a dream  
 The mount whereon the Son of Man once stood  
 Transfigured, while a heavenly radiance clothed  
 The form of frail humanity. And soon  
 The vision changed, and I beheld the world  
 And heaven mingled; and beside the throne  
 He who was slain, bestowing love's last gift,  
 Now sat, a spirit of immortal light.  
 And round about, a countless throng of men,  
 Stripped of their earthly weeds, resplendent shone  
 With that same radiance; and an angel cried,  
 'The sons of God are manifest, and change  
 From glory still to glory ever fresh.'  
 And then I knew the world was God's own house,  
 And his most sacred shrine the heart of man.

#### NICODEMUS AND BIRTH FROM ABOVE.

It is a thing at which men still marvel that birth from above should be necessary in order to see the kingdom of God. Is not the kingdom of God some blessed state in the

future, which a man may see with earthly eyes, and to which he may be admitted as a reward for his orderly and respectable life? The wicked and disreputable must, of course, forsake their evil ways; but surely a man of blameless character, like Nicodemus, who has kept the law from his youth up, cannot need a new birth from the Spirit. Yet the aged Nicodemus had a wistful feeling that there was a grander life before him than he had ever known; but he feared that in his old age he could not change his habits, or feel the young ardour of a new and heavenly experience. Whether the Spirit, blowing where it listed, brought to Nicodemus a holier faith and a more devoted love, and made him profoundly conscious that he was a child of God, we do not know; but even age may wait in silent adoration for the inflowing of the Spirit, and need not shut out the vision of God by the black veil of self-satisfaction. When from the fulness of Divine grace the Spirit is poured out, the old men too begin to dream dreams, and amid the vanishing of earthly things behold that which is real and abiding, the kingdom of God within them.

What, then, is it to be born from above? There are two births, the earthly and the heavenly, and the earthly is meant to be only a transient preparation for the heavenly. Man was created for a glorious destiny, to be a child of God, walking in conscious communion with infinite love and holiness. In the still depths of every soul the eternal Word delivers its oracles, though the darkness of human passion and pride cannot comprehend them. In the rapt awe of prayer spirit meets Spirit, and a heavenly wisdom, strength, and joy, come down to bless the worshipper. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain dwells with the man of lowly heart, filling him with a life Divine and blessed, which is wholly hidden from the proud and ambitious. But the actual life of multitudes of men is sadly removed from this experience of faith; and they cannot see the kingdom of God on account of the thick cloud of earthly desire which hides it from their eyes. They seek honour one from another, greedy of worldly advancement and distinction, laying up

treasures in abundance upon earth, but few treasures which will abide when the things of earth die like a vanished dream. They mistake cunning for wisdom, palliate deceit by the necessities of trade, and are driven by petulant passions and unjust aversions. And even among the religious how much is there of spiritual arrogance, how little of meek and holy affection ! How much zeal for the eradication of heresy, how little self-sacrificing and sympathetic love for the salvation of the sinful ! What a display of piety of which all men speak well, what timidity when a cross is the prize of devotion !

And if, having tasted the grace of God, we ask, What of ourselves ? must not a faithful answer still be tinged with sadness ? Are our hearts so pure, so untainted by the things of earth and self, that we can see God ? Have we come out of the darkness, and been born into the light of eternal day, where we look upon the deep things of God, and hear the voice of his love breathing peace upon hearts become sweet and innocent as a child's ? Do our thoughts, desires, emotions, move responsive to his will ? Is his grace sufficient for us under all disappointments ? Do we seek first and always his kingdom and his righteousness ? How far are these things at least an aspiration and a cherished purpose ? Do our souls thirst for the living God ? Do we open wide their doors that the king of glory may come in ? When we ask ourselves such questions in all solemnity and candour, we cease to marvel that the holy Son of God, in his overflowing devotion to the Father's will, and abiding consciousness of his love, should say to us ' Ye must be born from above.' For even if we have the earnest of the Spirit, still there is a glory to be revealed ; and though now we are sons of God, we know not yet what we shall be when we have grown into the stature of the fulness of Christ.

To the Christian, then, it ought not to be surprising that even a blameless Nicodemus must be born from above. The life of duty is not sufficient. Duty is, indeed, a grand and Divine power ; and the commandment is holy, and just, and good ; and yet the man of duty may need to have

his heart cleansed from the idolatry of self, and the eyes of his soul opened to a realm of faith and love which he has never seen. To become not only the obedient organs of the Divine will, but the revealers of God's Holy Spirit; to rest in God, and silence every passion that we may hear his voice of love; to prefer his glory to all the attractions of wealth, power, or station; to feel that he is the supreme good, and to love him with all the heart, and mind, and strength—this is to be born from above, and to enter into the fellowship of the Christian life, a life in whose regenerating waters every soul must be baptized before it can see the kingdom of God. Come, then, O peace of God that passeth understanding, and rest upon our wearied hearts. No longer would we struggle for a selfish and perishable good. Vanish, the illusions of time and sense, and let eternal realities abide with us, that in losing our lives we may find them, and dying to self may rise to live for ever with God.

Γέρων ἄνωθεν γεγεννημένος.

(An old man who has been born from above.)

Through three score years and ten thy love has led me,  
And gratitude to thee my bosom fills.  
Thou hast supplied my wants, and still hast fed me  
With manna sweet from off the heavenly hills.

Unseen and unconfessed thou didst sustain me  
In all my childhood's stormy joys and tears.  
Through nature wild and reckless thou didst train me  
For holy service in my future years.

By passions strong and fierce my heart was riven;  
When lo! my wondering eyes beheld thy face;  
For thou didst seek me, and then, much forgiven,  
I wept, and loved, and marvelled at thy grace.

And now the twilight shadows are descending,  
And manhood's fervent noon has sunk to rest;  
But o'er my steps thy mercy still is bending,  
And with thy smile my fading years are blest.

I look with calm on life's retreating pleasure,  
 And radiant peace glows o'er my evening sky  
 For 'thy redeeming goodness knows no measure.  
 And joys unknown beyond the valley lie.

Oh, may I then, with trust and faith unclouded,  
 Fulfil the duties which my age may bring,  
 That when thy love, in death's dark mantle shrouded,  
 Invites me home, my hand to thine may cling.

And when life's feverish dreams are past for ever,  
 Shall all my thought and love be fixed on thee ;  
 For sin can never more my heart dis sever  
 From thee whose saving love enfoldeth me.

### GOD'S GIFT OF LOVE TO THE WORLD.

'God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.' These words (which I take to be words of the Evangelist) are the utterance of a glowing personal faith, resting on a profound experience. The Apostle, having been born from above, had passed out of darkness into light, out of death into life ; and this life, in contrast with the fleeting shadows of the world and the perishing desires of men, bore the stamp of eternity. And it had come to him through Jesus Christ, who, to his faith and love, was the one man among men, the only one, who had brought into the world the fulness of communion with God, a Son of God unique in the depth and power of his spirit. This was a gift from heaven that satisfied the desire of his soul ; that, in the midst of poverty, supplied him with riches that pass not away ; that raised him, a persecuted outcast of men, into a Divine fellowship. The Beloved had overcome the

world ; and he too, through his faith in the Beloved, had overcome.

There are two ways in which the thoughts are thus drawn to the love of God. Every good and perfect gift comes down from him, and is an offering of love ; and no gift is so precious as that which fills the heart with God, and returns an answer of peace to our cry out of the depths. And so the life of the Spirit which is given through Christ proves the love of him from whom it comes. And secondly, the Son lives in the life of the Father, and offers himself as a pure tabernacle for the indwelling of the Spirit of God ; so that the love itself was manifest, breathing from human lips, soothing with the tender touch of a human hand. For a holy and spiritual love was the glory that shone in the face of Christ ; and that which is finest in humanity must come from the deep source of being, a single ray revealing the nature of the full-orbed splendour. He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him ; and the stream of Divine life flowed upon the world through the Loving and Beloved. Let us learn from this to see a gift of God's love in all heaven-sent men, the wise and good, who sweeten the bitterness of human life, and lead their brethren upwards out of their selfish darkness ; and no less in the angel souls whose gentle beam of grace and truth lights a few wanderers on their way.

This particular gift was not bestowed on a few Galilean fishermen only ; nor was it confined to the Jewish race. It was a new ideal of life, wide as humanity, and appealing to all receptive souls, wherever they might be found. Jew, Greek, Roman, Barbarian, all alike might receive the Spirit, and through their fellowship with Christ become conscious that they were sons of God. The gift, then, was meant for the world, and proved how God loved the world. So those who are in him must love the world ; not with that love which is enmity against God, pampering and glorifying self with its vain pomps and pleasures, but seeking to communicate to it the fulness of heavenly life, and, through the law of self-sacrifice, to bind men together into a holy

brotherhood. This is a faith so vast and transforming that few have yet grasped it. Mammon is the god of the nations, and has blinded their hearts. • They refuse to look upon one another with the eyes of justice and of love. Christendom, so called with grim irony, is armed with the most hideous powers of destruction, and ready to rush to mutual carnage whenever some infatuated and selfish statesman lets slip the dogs of war. Theology has sought to imprison God's love within party walls, and has uttered blasphemy against the Holy Spirit whenever it has appeared without the party dress. And now even the would-be saviours of society are crying out in effect, 'seek ye first the kingdom of mammon and his comforts, and spiritual things will be added unto you.' Oh! where is the mighty spirit that made the slave sing in his bonds, and the master treat the slave as a brother, and rich and poor sit down together in the kingdom of God, feeling that their petty distinctions sunk away in the flood of heavenly life that was poured into their hearts? God loves the world. Therefore he loves the men of every nation, of every language, of every creed. He loves the man that jostles me in the street. He loves the man that overreaches me, and deprives me of my rights, or who insults or slanders me. And if I call myself a Christian, I must love them with a deep and holy love, and must be willing even to suffer in order to give light to their darkened eyes, and soften their hard hearts with brotherly affections. Otherwise I have no real fellowship with the Father and the Son. 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer, and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.'

To draw men from the perishing life of dreams and shadows, and bring them to the eternal life, the life of God in the soul—this was the purpose of God's gift to the world, the purpose which Jesus Christ accepted as a commandment from his Father, and for the fulfilment of which he loved, and suffered, and died. The Evangelist had seen this life, the eternal life which was with the Father, dwelling in a human form, and opening for every child of man vistas of grandeur stretching beyond the prophet's vision, and losing

themselves in the infinite glory where we know not yet what we shall be. This life was for all those who had eyes of faith to see it. But what was faith? Not the shrivelled creed that Jesus was this or that metaphysical mystery, but the reverent and clinging confidence that here was the true life, a confidence so full and constraining that the soul leaped up emancipated, and followed Jesus amid the jeers and persecution of the world, gladly offering up its sins and follies to be consumed in the fire of his spirit. We have heard the witness, and we too have bowed down before the majesty of that spirit, and believe that it is the healing power of the world, which must reign till it has put all enemies under its feet, and our earth becomes a paradise of God. Oh! may this faith so increase in me that in the little kingdom within all enemies may be subdued, and love reign there in unclouded light.

Such, then, being the Divine purpose, Christ was not sent into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Nevertheless, judgment came, and since then what multitudes have perished in their sins. It is always so. When a call to higher righteousness sounds among the nations, the object is to bring them a richer and nobler life. But it inevitably passes into a judgment, a 'crisis' in human affairs. Men of holy aspiration and endeavour rejoice in the growing light, and brace themselves to tread the arduous way by which all true advance in spiritual life must be accomplished. But others who have scorned the ideal life, and can see in the new movement nothing but an insulting rebuke of their low aims and evil practices, hate the growing light, and by rejecting the proffered gift deepen the shade of their condemnation. Having heard the truth, they have no cloak for their sin. But is this the whole case? It was only natural that it should seem so to the Apostle, whose own soul was so full of revealing light and adoring love; surely, he must have thought, nothing but the wilful blindness of sin could prevent men from seeing the divine beauty of this new life, and giving up all to follow it. But the Master's sympathy



saw more deeply—'forgive them, for they know not what they do.' In these great crises good and earnest men may be perplexed; and enthusiasm for the new may seem like treachery to the old and tried. The absolutely simple heart may have no doubts; but the instinctive decision of the pure soul may be obstructed by intellectual difficulties, and a thousand ties which in themselves are innocent may hold them back from embracing what seems not only perilous, but uncertain. But, as I have said, it was quite natural that in the great drama which was being acted the powers that crucified Christ and persecuted the Christian should appear altogether wicked; and we cannot doubt that in numberless instances it was indeed the subtlety of selfishness and sin that blinded the eyes and hardened the heart. We must beware of that subtlety in ourselves, and pray for the simplicity which follows the light with uncorrupted heart, and looks still upward for a glory to be revealed. That simplicity is to be found in love, in the crucifixion of self, in the compassionate sympathy which sees the good in the midst of evil, and recognizes everywhere what is most akin to that which is divinest in itself. The soul thus cleansed will acknowledge the higher when it comes, and will not fear the light when judgment once more descends upon the world.

Ἡγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον.

(God loved the world.)

Teach me to love the world as thou dost love,  
 Ready to give my dearest and my best,  
 Than self more dear, to save it from its sins,  
 And turn all hearts to thee. Oh! grant the faith  
 In thy beloved Son, thy holy Lamb,  
 Which wakes, within, the sleeping life of love,  
 And makes us one with him who died that men  
 Might share his life eternal, and might dwell  
 In thee, from whose exhaustless fulness all  
 Who look to thee in fervent prayer receive  
 Thy Spirit's bounteous gift. But from that love

Which clings in fondness to the world's bad ways,  
And sinks the soul in its corrupting guile,  
Save me, O God ; for earth must pass away,  
Ambition's pride, and all the idle glare  
Of social rank, and wealth's delusive charm.  
That which we see is temporal, and soon  
Must yield to time's corrosive touch, and sink  
To dark oblivion. But the things unseen,  
Love, holiness, and truth, eternal stand  
Before thy glorious throne, and speak thy word  
Within the heart of man. To that blest word  
Be all my powers subdued, that I may still  
Show forth thy love which quickens and redeems.

O mystery that broodeth o'er the world,  
Where pain and sin do hold their revels high,  
As though some plague, with force demonic hurled,  
Came armed with wrath from an offended sky.

We mortals frail behold the scene with fear, •  
And trust, half conquered, trembles 'neath its shield ;  
No God of love, we faithless cry, is here,  
Amid such horrors of the flood and field.

But whence the sympathy within the breast,  
And whence the love, with tears for mortal woe  
Descend they not from regions of the blest,  
Whence love looks sadly on the strife below ?

The love that finds in man a holy shrine,  
And o'er the tried and wronged doth gently bow  
Comes as an angel from the throne Divine,  
And bears the seal of godhead on her brow.

For love is not begotten of the earth,  
Nor perishes as figments of the dust ;  
Eternal, she proclaims her heavenly birth,  
And breathes in reverent souls undying trust.

Oh ! then we'll trust, although we cannot see  
Amid the horrors of the flood and field,  
That love directs the darkest mystery,  
And, when death's gates are passed, will stand revealed.

### THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

The literal truth of this narrative has been called in question, not only on general grounds affecting the character of the Gospel as a whole, but on account of the difficulty of fitting the events into the historical framework provided for us by the other Gospels. But where the accounts are so fragmentary, and where many incidents appear to have been remembered, while their precise chronological position was forgotten, we must expect to meet with such difficulties, and we may be content to accept the spiritual lessons which the Evangelists place before us, without prying too curiously into questions of external facts, which, after the lapse of many years, are sure to group themselves somewhat differently according to varying recollections and mental tendencies. One may plead in favour of the present narrative, not only its dramatic vividness, which might be partly due to the strong imagination and descriptive power of the writer, but the truth of local colouring, which is given quite incidentally, and without any attempt to draw a picture of the scene, such as a foreign writer would present who had collected distant materials for the construction of his history. The only direct information, for the benefit of the reader, is contained in the statement that ' Jews have no dealings with Samaritans ' (and this, which may possibly be a gloss, is omitted by a few authorities). All else betokens a writer so familiar with the locality that it did not occur to him to describe it. The deep well, known by the name of the patriarch Jacob ; the low wall surrounding it, which afforded a seat for the tired traveller ; the adjacent

mountain, the seat of the Samaritan worship ; the fields of corn beneath the hills, giving promise of a bounteous harvest ; the woman coming with her vessel to draw water ; all appear with perfect fidelity to the facts of time and place. The mention of Sychar has indeed occasioned some uncertainty ; but a town of similar name is referred to in the Talmud, and it has been discovered in the modern Askar, about half a mile from Jacob's well.

Jesus, we are told, was wearied with his journey, and sat down to rest by the well, while his disciples, who were apparently more vigorous, went away to buy food. We are so completely without information as to the bodily appearance of Jesus that the slight indications which remain are peculiarly interesting. This account suggests that he was less robust, and of a more delicate and sensitive frame, than the sturdy fishermen who followed his teaching. The intimation which is thus conveyed does not stand alone. On another occasion he was asleep in the boat while his disciples tugged at the oar. He seems not to have been strong enough to carry his cross, for Simon of Cyrene was impressed for the purpose ; and his physical frailty may account for death supervening, to the surprise of Pilate, so much sooner than was usual. But though, on the present occasion, he was tired and hungry and thirsty, he soon forgot his physical needs in the interest of his conversation with the Samaritan woman. It was through no boastfulness that he placed himself, as the dispenser of the water of eternal life, so far above the woman with her water-pot and her daily drudgery. If she scrupled to supply a thirsty Jew with a drink of water, he would press upon her to receive draughts of that spiritual truth with which his heart was full. In the East the prophet held a position which is unknown in our Western habits ; and the teacher who was consecrated to God could speak of his vocation, and of the importance of that which he had to communicate, with perfect simplicity and lowliness of mind. Jesus knew that the spiritual wisdom which was in him was 'the gift of God,' and yet for practical

~~purposes~~ was bound up with his own personality, and was not some abstract thing in the air, which everyone could take hold of at his will. And so, when the opportunity came, the eager spirit vanquished the bodily fatigue; and in the simplicity of love and faith he told the woman that he could confer upon her infinitely more than she could ever give to him, and that he was in fact the expected Messiah, the one who was anointed to receive in their completeness the highest spiritual revelations of Israel. But these revelations were not to be confined to himself. When imparted to others, they would satisfy for ever their soul's thirst, becoming in them a well of eternal life, raising them from the transient and delusive life of the world into the life in God which abides for ever.

Κεκοπιακώς.

(Wearied.)

Oh ! weary, weary, weary !  
Tired I bow my head ;  
Life's evening falls so dreary,  
And all my hope is fled.

Oh ! weary, weary, weary !  
Humbly to thee I cry ;  
Disperse the cloud so dreary  
That darkens o'er my sky.

But hark ! a heavenly chorus  
Steals softly on my ear :  
God's light is beaming o'er us,  
God's love is always near.

When Jesus too was weary,  
And rested by the well,  
His thoughts were never dreary  
His courage never fell.

He saw the night approaching  
Wherein no man can toil;  
But e'en night's gloom encroaching  
His trust could never spoil.

To hear the Father's pleading  
Was more than meat and drink;  
And from his Father's leading  
His will would never shrink.

Then let me hear the voices  
Of the angelic host,  
Till all my heart rejoices,  
And makes in God its boast.

And though my arm be weary,  
And strength may fade away,  
Yet life, no longer dreary,  
Shall shine to perfect day.

---

Ἴνα μὴ διψῶ μηδὲ διέρχωμαι ἐνθάδε ἀντλεῖν.  
(That I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.)

Come, for my heart is weary;  
The battle is fierce and long;  
And in days so dark and dreary  
I cannot uplift my song.

---

Sin marshals his host around me,  
And tempts me with luring wile;  
And my passions foul have bound me  
A slave to their shame and guile

Without thy strength to sustain me  
I must fall on the crimsoned field.  
Oh! come in thy might, and train me  
The Spirit's keen sword to wield.

## A Prophet's Lament

Then shall I, with weapon glorious,  
 My enemies turn to flight,  
 And, ever in thee victorious,  
 Come scatheless out of the fight. |

I will joy in this great salvation,  
 And chant to thee songs of praise ;  
 And all my soul's adoration  
 Shall gladden the peaceful days.

## THE LAMENT OF AN ANCIENT PROPHET.

*Κενῶς ἐκοπίασα. ἤτήσατο τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀποθανεῖν.*

'I have laboured in vain' (Isaiah xlix. 4). 'He requested for himself that he might die' (I Kings xix. 4).

Oh ! why is nature full of joy,  
 While I am weeping, worn with grief ?  
 I toiled for good without alloy,  
 And these gay scenes bring no relief.

The sun is shining over head ;  
 The birds are singing in the trees ;  
 The flowers quit their wintry bed,  
 And woo with sweets the wandering bees ;

The stream is dancing in the light ;  
 The lambs are frisking on the lea ;  
 The children chase the insect's flight ;—  
 But ah ! their joy comes not to me.

It speaks of days when hope was young,  
 And I was full of holy zeal,  
 And, by man's sin and sorrow stung,  
 I longed that sin and grief to heal.

And now I'm weary in the strife ;  
My heart within is full of pain ;  
I summoned men to nobler life,  
But all my labour has been vain.

And why pursue a useless task,  
And waste on men this fleeting breath ?  
To lay me down is all I ask,  
~~And welcome the cold hand of death.~~

But hush ! A voice in accents meek  
Chides tenderly my faithless heart,  
And bids me springtide's beauty greet,  
And in all nature's joy have part.

And 'rest,' it says, 'in genial bowers,  
Till thy soul's winter melts away,  
And faith peeps forth, like opening flowers  
That smile to meet the vernal day.

'No holy word was ever lost,  
Nor ever vain was loving toil,  
Nor truth by angry tempests tost  
To wither in a fruitless soil.

'So rest thee here, my weary one ;  
And though past labours now seem vain,  
Soon will return the glorious sun  
~~Of faith and love, to ease thy pain.~~

'And one will come, with faith's bright spear  
And truth and freedom's flag unfurled,  
Who ne'er will yield to sloth or fear  
Till he has overcome the world.

'Though wearied, still shall sound his call,  
And burn, within, the prophet's fire,  
And from his lips shall ceaseless fall  
Pure words to waken high desire.'



Yea, O my God, in thee I'll rest,  
And, though I'm weary, fear no ill ;  
By doubt and fear no more oppressed,  
I'll humbly wait thy further will.

And so I'll close my weary eyes,  
And sink into the land of dreams,  
And see, amid sleep's changeful skies,  
A vision of Love's orient beams.

And soon, refreshed, on eagle's wing  
I'll fly to greet the solar blaze,  
Thy healing grace in rapture sing,  
And fear no more the coming days.

---

'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth : for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is Spirit ; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' This is one of the grandest sayings that have come down to us from Christ. As is his habit, he makes use of a particular instance to set forth a universal principle, which may act as a solvent whenever similar questions arise, or, better still, create that spiritual frame of mind from which all such questions will be absent. Jews and Samaritans hated one another because both alike had a narrow conception of God, and based on that conception an exclusiveness and presumption which they mistook for genuine piety. The conflicting claims simply disappeared in the larger truth which embraced what was affirmative in each. Jerusalem was indeed a fitting place for worship ; so was Gerizim ; so is every spot throughout the boundless universe, the temple of the eternal and omnipresent Spirit. But truth of worship depends on the heart of the worshipper, not on time or place ; and when Jew and Samaritan, in the same filial spirit, call upon the Father, they become brothers, and their old controversy ceases to have any meaning. A similar narrowness of

view has separated Christians from one another, while each zealous faction claims to be alone the true Church. But the Spirit of the Church of Christ transcends them all. The kingdom of God is not here or there, shut up in men's petty enclosures; it is within, and wherever men worship the Father in spirit and truth, there is the Church of Christ, whether it be allowed to bear his name or not. Theologians, indeed, may seize on the word 'truth' to justify their own exclusive claims; but truth, in this Gospel, is not some special form of theological conception, but an inward principle of life, which men can practise; a truth of soul, a filial heart answering to God's idea, beating in unison with the Divine Spirit, and conscious of his indwelling love and holiness; a conscience pure and serene, which pronounces just judgments, viewing things in the light of God, and not in the darkness of self and its perishing interests. It is in this truth of soul, in the inner sanctuary of the spirit, that we are to worship God, calling on him as our Father, and offering him the spiritual sacrifice of a filial and loving heart; "for this is the worship which God seeks, and into which he draws every soul that discards the idols of the mind, and with lowly submissiveness and trust receives his grace, and, sinking away from self, would enter that holy communion where God is all in all.

We should observe that here, as in the Lord's prayer, and in the commandment, 'pray to thy Father who is in secret,' Jesus speaks of God alone, and says nothing of himself. He has declared that he can impart the water of eternal life, and he is about to declare himself the Messiah; but when he comes to speak of the greatest act of religion, he does not refer to himself even as the channel through whom the grace of worship may flow, but, drawing from his own profound experience, from that filial consciousness which placed him alone in the world, he describes the genuine worship which, in prophetic vision, he saw rising from the hearts of men, and offered to the Father alone and immediately. Here, then, is the universal religion, the true Christianity, which is yet to come.

Nor must we forget that God seeks those who will offer a spiritual worship. He does not wait till we turn and implore his mercy, or remain apart till we come with some costly gift or bleeding sacrifice to propitiate and reconcile him. He is here, within us and around us, seeking in a thousand ways the true homage of adoring souls. Through his beloved Son he came to seek and save the lost, and drew the first real worship from that forlorn woman of Samaria; and through that same love he has called to himself a countless multitude of men. Still he is seeking for a true worship, and waiting for a reverent silence among warring sects that his calm voice may be heard, and men bow down in the humility of gratitude and love. Still he is the first to offer reconciliation; and if there is aught of worth or nobleness in us, it is only in answer to his pleading. O great and wondrous faith! The Father seeketh my worship, drawing me to himself by cords of love, restoring my soul, and asking, as for some precious gift, the poor offering of his child's devotion. Let me surrender my will, that his Will may reign in me, and that, bowing down in prayer that comes from the heart, I may worship in spirit and in truth.

Τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν.

(They that worship must worship in spirit and in truth.)

A spirit stood before me, and unrolled,  
 In long perspective, story strange, displayed  
 In shifting scenes of olden time, how man  
 From rude beginnings climbed the arduous slope  
 That leads, by many devious ways obscure,  
 From earth's dim mists to God's eternal light.  
 And there I saw the superstitions foul  
 Of savage nations, Moloch's cruel rites,  
 And sacrificial pomp, where human blood  
 Stained altars rude, and invocations wild  
 Called on offended deities to hear.  
 Yet in that wilderness of petty creeds,

Where thought, forlorn, pursued, her wayward track,  
Led on by suffering and despair, I still  
Could see some flowery mead or verdure fresh,  
Some gleams of beauty, or some crystal fount,  
Where child-like man might slake his thirst for God,  
And find in sweet affections nature's bliss.

The scenery changed ; and I beheld a fane  
Enclosed in spacious courts and cloisters cool,  
With goodly stones and offerings rare adorned,  
And purple veils, and golden vine outspread,  
Wherein no image was ; for th' inmost shrine,  
Holy of holies, for God's house designed,  
Betokened by its vacant solitude  
A God invisible to mortal eye,  
Mysterious Presence, whose high glory shunned  
Similitude in marble or in gold.

Not far away a mountain famed of yore  
Reared its proud form, and on its summit stood  
Another temple, where the God unseen,  
The universal Lord, in solemn rites  
Was reverently adored. Two peoples thus  
Confessed an omnipresent Deity,  
And one exalted faith inflamed their zeal.  
Yet mutual rancour drove them far apart ;  
For in devotion blind they honoured place  
And forms of worship, idols of men's thought,  
More than the Spirit who in secret sees  
The reverence of the heart, and binds in one  
All who approach with adoration due,  
And own the thrill of God's eternal life.

Alas ! Religion, thou who wast ordained  
By thy Creator as a pledge of peace  
And union 'mongst mankind, hast been despoiled,  
And forced to minister to passions base,  
And rear partition-walls of pride and scorn.  
And e'en the lessons taught by God's own Son  
Have been despised, lost in sectarian strife ;  
And hoary superstition has usurped

The throne of Christ, and full of arrogance  
And flaming zeal, with cruel hand has driven  
Man against man in fierce unholy wrath.

But thou, eternal Spirit, art enthroned  
Above the starry spheres, nor dwellest thou  
In temples made with hands ; but everywhere  
Through nature's wide expanse thou equally  
Art present ; and each part of this fair globe  
Is full of thee,—the ocean's roaring caves,  
The wilderness of snow on mountain slopes,  
The bounteous fields, where beauty smiles, and man  
Receives from thee the harvest of his toil.  
Thus every spot is holy, and all time  
Steeped in the sacredness of sabbath prayer.  
And thou dost seek a worship undefiled,  
In spirit and in truth, from hearts whose love  
Looks ever to the central Love, the Light  
Of all our seeing, Life of all true life.

O Father, ever present, whose great love  
Encircles the wide world, and seeks at home  
In every heart, bestow on us the grace  
To give ourselves, with reverence meek and true,  
To thy pure service, that with kindling power  
Thou may'st abide in us, and we in thee.  
And then our love will widen as thine own,  
And true religion, pure and undefiled,  
Will scatter blessings where we go, and help  
To usher in that age of gold, when man,  
Thy child, shall hate no more his brother man,  
But envy, malice, cruelty, and strife  
Shall perish in thy Holy Spirit's fire.

Thus in the future dim I saw the reign  
Of righteousness, God's kingdom come at last,

The vision faded, a dissolving dream ;  
But memory keeps the apocalypse of love.

---

' My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' This is one of those sayings, small in

form, but large in meaning, which are so characteristic of Christ's teaching. Wearied with his journey, he soon forgot, in the interest of his conversation, his fatigue and hunger; and when the disciples returned, and pressed him to eat, he could think of nothing but the work to which he had been committed by the Divine will, of the lofty truths which he had been led to utter, and of the prospective ripening of those truths in the minds of men. As he had felt impelled to offer water of eternal life to the Samaritan woman, so he had received spiritual nourishment himself, and in a holy exaltation had risen superior to mere physical want. Here, then, we are admitted to the deepest secret and sustaining power of Christ's life, the abiding consciousness of a higher Will, and the reverent acceptance of a work which he was sent to accomplish. This characteristic pervades all his activity. He sought no ends of his own, but only the furtherance of the kingdom of God; and when the Divine monitor seemed to shatter his hopes, and led him to the cross, he would not doubt or flinch. \*He spoke not his own thoughts, tinged with the self-satisfaction which is so apt to sit as a tawdry robe on the severe form of truth, but only those which he heard through self-renunciation and communion with God, and which make their authoritative appeal first of all to the soul that is their medium; and he kept his judgment cool and just by rising above the feverish delusions of self, and looking at all things from that Divine centre where there is no obliquity of vision.

The perfect disciple shall be as his master; and the disciple, though sadly imperfect, should aim at the same ideals, and seek to become perfect by receiving into himself the same spirit of life. We too have been sent into the world for some higher purpose than the gratification of self. We too have monitions of duty from a holier realm than that of sense and appetite. We too are conscious of a supreme Will, which lays its authority upon our will, and commands us to surrender all to its behests; and we have an inward recognition of that Will as absolutely good, and

alone entitled to our undivided love. Here, then, is the Christian ideal, to live, through the self-devotion of love, in perfect conformity with the Divine Will, and to finish day by day the work which has been appointed for us. How we fall short of this, and must often look up with baffled effort and the sorrow of failure which we might have prevented, we know full well ; but still a clear vision in the conscience, and a great love in the heart, lift us again out of momentary disaster, and impart consistency, grace, and dignity to life. They dwell within as an earnest of what we shall be when the weakness of mortality is past, and on the soul which they have made captive they already shed something of the splendour of the angelic world.

Doing the will of God is nourishment to the soul. Man shall not live by bread alone. There is a hunger of the spirit as well as a hunger of the body. There are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness ; and many who have not defined their need have a secret sense of want, the consciousness of a void within which the world cannot fill. It is not only the Psalmist whose soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, and can obtain no rest till he has found him. It is vain to tell us to be satisfied with positive knowledge, and not seek to penetrate the ultimate mysteries of being ; for we cannot thus mutilate our nature even if we would, and after we have been told that we know nothing of God, and it does not signify, we turn with the wistful gaze of a famished creature towards a universe that for the moment seems empty and dishonoured. Whence, then, shall we obtain bread that nourishes unto eternal life ? From doing the will of God ; for the knowledge of that will lies nearest to our conscience, and, though we cannot move a step without the sustaining power of God and the invitations of his grace, yet he makes his further gifts conditional on our obedience, and on our loving acceptance of that which he has already bestowed. Nevertheless, this obedient doing of God's will, on which the Divine gift is conditional, must not be a slavish act, outwardly performed to win a reward from a master, but

must spring from an inner worship and love, which gladly yields all that it can to him by whom all is given. It is only thus that communion is established between the soul and God, and the channel opened whereby the Holy Spirit can descend, and satisfy the hunger of our hearts.

He who has thus surrendered his own will to the Father has the witness of the Spirit in himself, and finds in conscience the one supreme authority for his conduct. And yet even conscience is not infallible, and that of the savage does not teach him the laws of civilization. Like other faculties, it needs to be educated, and to work continually towards an ideal excellence. We hear the Spirit, not according to the perfection of the Divine words, but according to the faultiness of our faculty. Accordingly our individual limitations must be broken down by our communion with higher souls, with holier children of God as well as with the Father. Herein we discover the inestimable benefit of the teaching of Christ and of the common life of a Christian society,—not that they supersede, but that they enlighten and strengthen our own spiritual discernment. The characteristic work of Christ is not to separate us from God, and subject us, like slaves, to his commands, but to bring us to the Father, and give us the freedom of sons; and we are not what he would have us be till his love is enthroned in our hearts, and we judge for ourselves that which is right through the immediate revelation of the Spirit. As we understand his gospel more fully, he himself ceases to be an authority far away in place and time, and becomes for us, as for Paul, a Spirit-Lord, an indwelling life, shaped indeed to our thought by that gracious life which appeared in Palestine so many centuries ago, but now dwelling immortal in the heart of our race, and drawing us step by step towards the infinite holiness and perfect truth of God. But would we see and hear those things which prophets and kings desired, and which for them were still behind the veil, we must make it our meat to do the will of God, the duty that lies nearest to our hand, and which we clearly know. This will feed



our souls with the bread that comes down from heaven, and give us the single eye wherewith we are full of light, the humility by which we enter the kingdom of heaven, the purity of heart by which we see God ; and as we follow the immediate light which is vouchsafed to us, our path will become plainer as we go, and the way which now is narrow, and sometimes perplexing, will broaden at last into the spacious fields of eternal life.

Ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

(Eternal Life.)

O my Father, gently guide me  
 Where the flowers of faith do blow,  
 Where the streams of love beside me  
 Softly murmur as they flow,  
 Where some beams of hope immortal  
 Tremble midst the valley's gloom,  
 Where, about its silent portal,  
 Angels watch the lonely tomb.  
 Let me walk in trust and gladness,  
 Weaving garlands on my way,  
 Fearing not earth's parting sadness  
 While I move towards perfect day.  
 Thou on earth didst ever love me,  
 Thou didst choose my wavering heart  
 Thou wilt spread thy arms above me ;  
 From thee I shall never part.  
 Then, with sin and death behind me,  
 I will sing eternal praise ;  
 Nothing ever more shall blind me  
 To the beauty of thy ways ;  
 But my soul, redeemed and lowly,  
 Lost in love shall worship thee,  
 Thee the wise and just and holy,  
 Who in love forgavest me.

## THE SON CAN DO NOTHING OF HIMSELF.

JESUS had done a work on a sabbath, which grievously offended the Jews who were strict observers of the law. This gave rise to an argument, the substance of which is preserved in the fifth chapter of our Gospel. In the course of this chapter there are profound utterances about the nature of the spiritual life ; and we must try to read them, not as hard dogmas addressed to the understanding, but as vital truths communicated to the soul.

An argument applied to a particular case rests on a universal principle ; and consequently, while the argument here presented has immediate reference to Jesus himself, the principle is applicable to all sons of God, that is to all who 'are led by the Spirit of God,' according to their several degrees. Jesus begins his defence by a statement which startled the Jews, and seemed to them impious,—'My Father worketh even until now, and I work.' This introduces us to the distinction between a son and a servant. A servant knows not what his master does, and must obey without demur the commandment which is given to him ; the son knows what his father does, and is governed by his spirit. The Jews were shocked, not only by the violation of the sabbath, but by the expression 'my Father,' which seemed to them a claim to be equal to God. Jesus at once corrects this misapprehension ; but before proceeding to the correction we must pause on the words themselves, and try to understand them better than his Jewish opponents. The ability to say in all sincerity 'my Father' may be taken as a test of Divine sonship. It is easy to speak of God as the Father of mankind, or of the universe, and yet have no sense of our own filial relation to him. We have not passed from the legal into the spiritual state till the words 'my Father' spring spontaneously to the lips day by day, and hour by hour, and we feel that God is our very own, the soul of our souls, the life of our lives, not only issuing laws from the distant heavens, but speaking in solemn and loving tones wherever

any individual heart is drawn into sacred fellowship with him. And he to whom the sense of sonship was the very breath of his life could not but feel that God was his Father, dwelling in him, and filling his soul with light. So, on another occasion, in a moment of spiritual loneliness and exaltation, transported by the grandeur of the revelations made to him, he reasons thus,—Only the Father can see into the heart of the child; only the child can understand the heart of the Father; and only the true and loving child can reveal that heart to others who know it not yet. This sense of personal communion was certainly not unknown to the highest minds in Judaism (see especially the 139th Psalm); but the growth of legal and formal religion had produced a dullness of spiritual apprehension, and when Christ, with perfect simplicity, spoke from the fulness of intimate communion, his words seemed to the religious authorities of the time to be presumptuous and even blasphemous. As Paul says, a hardening had befallen them, and they could not understand.

This consciousness of personal communion with God, and consequent endeavour to follow the ways of God, so far from being a presumptuous claim to equality, is a sign of the most absolute dependence. The genuine son does nothing from his own initiative, but is, to borrow the language of Paul, a 'follower of God' and a 'fellow-worker' with him. This is the very meaning of the filial relation. A father discloses his own purposes with ever growing fulness to his son; and so he who is striving to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect may look forward to ever brighter revelations, which will move the wonder of men. The most adorable power of God is that by which he communicates of his own life, wakening even those who are dead in trespasses and sins; and this quickening power belongs also to that indwelling of the Divine life which constitutes sonship. In the exercise of his gift the true child of God is not bound by the conventional rules of Church or State, but extends his quickening influence to whom he will, under the guidance of a just discernment.

The power of reading the human heart, and knowing what is in man, belongs to the spiritually gifted; and the Son, through the completeness of his own filial consciousness, is able to distinguish those who have the spirit of sonship from those who have it not. Wherever a child of God appears, there is a separating light, and a standard of purity, by which the good and bad are sifted; and accordingly, as St. Paul says, 'the saints shall judge the world,' yea even 'angels.' On account of this high prerogative the Son of God must be honoured, for it is impossible truly to honour a father while we dishonour his son. We must 'honour all men,' on account of the Divine image, whether hidden or revealed, in their nature. It is an impious inconsistency to 'bless the Lord and Father, and curse men, who are made after the likeness of God'; and 'if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.' Hence let us lay it to heart that all persecuting piety is false, and that, while the spiritual man judges all things, the unspiritual zealot will be blind to the presence of the Divine Spirit when working in unfamiliar ways.

Ὁ πατήρ μου ἕως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται.

(My Father worketh hitherto.)

Ye mountains, lakes, and fields,  
Still radiant in the light of glorious day,  
To me your beauty yields  
A joy more blessed than in times now far away.  
No days are common; all are full of deep  
And holy meaning for the soul that does not sleep.  
For God's eternal love,  
Which reigns for aye above,  
Speaks too from mountain, stream, and wayside flowers,  
And breathes a sacred music through the fleeting hours.

We may in childhood's days  
Be ravished with the beauteous forms and tints  
That nature wide displays,

But cannot understand its more mysterious hints,—

Hints which appeal to man's awakened years,  
And intimate far more than to the eye appears.

When dowered with the wealth  
Of boyhood's teeming health,  
We feel a rapture in wild nature's course,  
And own our fellowship with her unstinted force.

But till the soul awakes,  
And hears God's voice within its secret shrine,  
And sees the light that breaks  
In mystic dawn, than earthly splendours more divine,  
It cannot know the life and love that dwell  
In each proud scene, as in some consecrated cell.  
Then in the lowly sod  
We trace the feet of God ;  
In cataract and storm we own his power,  
And see his living thought in every wayside flower.

So mountain, lake, and field  
Rest in supernal light, and kindly bring  
Glad messages that yield  
O'erflowing joy that makes the listening soul to sing.  
Nature, in all her loveliness arrayed,  
Unfolds each grace, through God's revealing light displayed.  
Come, then, O waiting soul,  
And feel the soft control  
Of beauty, mantling over earth and sky,  
And singing hymns of praise to God for ever nigh.

The discourse now passes from general principles to their particular application, and Jesus, who was put upon his defence, speaks in the first person (v. 24). What was true in the abstract of a Son of God he believed to be true of himself. He felt, as many before and since have felt, that he had been sent to accomplish a special purpose in the world, and that the burden of a Divine message had been laid upon his heart and conscience. The living

light was not to be extinguished by dead precepts. There was in him a superabounding life, the life which lasts when systems of thought fall before advancing knowledge; and those who listened to the enunciation of this life, and committed themselves in humble trust to God, would experience the life in themselves, and pass away from the dead forms which entombed the soul. The hour seemed already come when those who were dead in trespasses and sins, or in ordinances and ceremonies, would hear the voice of the Son of God, of one who was not groping among mouldy records and dreary interpretations, but spoke with life-giving power of an immediate communion with God. For the genuine Son of God is not like a machine, rendering formal obedience to mechanical laws, but is full of life in himself, imparting to his words the demonstration of spirit and of power, with clear discernment of truth and duty, and of the hearts of men. And this life is *given*, flowing from the universal life of the Father, and therefore expressive of his mind and will.<sup>1</sup>

Οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν.

(They that heard shall live.)

Come, dwell in me; for oh! my heart is cold;  
I need thy fire to warm me into life:  
So weak am I, and under sin am sold,  
And flesh and spirit wage a deadly strife.

Come, dwell in me: then that dread strife is o'er,  
And victory doth don her angel plumes;  
In kneeling wonder I thy love adore,  
And all my soul its risen life assumes.

<sup>1</sup> Verses 28 and 29, in view of the Messianic expectations of the time, must, I think, be literally interpreted, though an oriental commentator understands them figuratively. See *An Eastern Exposition of the Gospel of Jesus according to St. John*. By Sri Paránanda, edited by R. L. Harrison. London, 1902. They may, however, be a reflection of the writer, who is not always careful to distinguish his own reflections from the words ascribed to the speakers in his narrative. Verse 30 seems the natural continuation of verse 27

Long in the grave of sin and shame I lay ;  
And then, O Son of Man, I heard thy voice ;  
Mine eyes beheld the dawn of living day,  
And thou didst bid my languid soul rejoice.

I rose new-born. The eternal life of love  
Throbb'd in my veins, and in my heart was peace ;  
For thou didst tell of pardon from above,  
And bring from sin's captivity release.

And yet, O God, I need thy constant grace  
To cleanse me from the clinging dregs of sin,  
Till, quite redeemed, I see thee face to face,  
And thy blest Spirit always dwell within.

### THE SOURCE OF JUST JUDGMENT.

JESUS had found that a work of benevolence performed on a sabbath was looked upon as impious, and that thoughts which had come to him as a breath of life from heaven were regarded as blasphemous. How could he justify the course which he was following ? Only by the utter renunciation of self. He could do nothing from himself ; for in proportion as self comes in, God withdraws. He could not speak from his own wisdom ; for then only could he be sure that his judgment was just when he heard the Divine voice sounding clear and calm above every personal claim. We may repeat the self-questioning and self-indication of Jesus, and give it a more general application.

How, then, is any reformer justified in standing alone, setting himself against the most authoritative and instructed opinion of his day, and telling the world that it is wrong ? Is there not room, in work of this kind, for much fanaticism, for self-deception and self-display, which reveal the dark-

ness of egotism rather than the light of God? So the upholders of ancient systems invariably think when the reformer arises: he, say, they, bears witness of himself; his witness is not true. And the reformer himself may well pause, astonished at his own temerity as he finds himself alone, and ask his heart whether he is following a will-of-the-wisp or the central light of all faithful souls. The true messenger of God feels the pressure and pain of solitary thought, and sees the glory of ancient wisdom, and sighs for the sympathy which he cannot purchase by unfaithfulness to the inner light; and only when he has felt the sympathy of God brooding over his heart, and in his uttermost self-surrender the vision of truth has come with a clearness that will not be denied, does he lift up his voice like a trumpet, and call his brethren to a new world of thought and action. And herein lies, I think, the distinction between the fanatic and the prophet. Both have the same temperament, the same susceptibility to overmastering conviction; and to both a light may come which is hidden from other men. \*But the fanatic allows self to obtrude its claims, and forgets that without continual and complete submission to the higher Will he cannot know what is of that Will; the prophet feels that only through the abandonment of self can he be the pure organ of the word of God, and he does not trust his own judgment till he is sincerely conscious that he is seeking not his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him.

Not many, however, are either fanatics or prophets: does the rule apply to the judgment of ordinary men in their pursuit of truth? We may best answer this question by noticing some of the chief influences which disturb the clearness and calmness of the judgment in the formation of belief.

Self-interest may, without the guilt of any conscious insincerity, deflect the mind from the narrow way of impartial thought, and incline it unduly towards arguments on one side and against arguments on the other. Belief, it is said, is not an affair of will, but necessarily follows the



evidence. True; but we can manipulate the evidence in our own favour, by making prominent the reasons which support the desired conclusion, and keeping objections out of sight. Not till we are prepared to follow the call of truth at every personal cost are we able to measure the whole case in even scales, and justified in asserting that we are led by the evidence alone. Every cautious Nicodemus who pays stolen visits to some new and higher thought is held back by regard for his position, and easily persuades himself that he is too old to take the regenerating step which would expose him to ridicule and reproach. Each ardent youth who rushes to patronize a sublime movement for lifting mankind out of their error and sin, and then, finding the sacrifices which it would involve, creeps back crestfallen to his riches, mollifies his wounded self-love by arguments which would be convincing were they alone in question. From liability to such bias of judgment we cannot wholly escape by any external change. The way of truth has indeed been made smoother, and she no longer walks with crown of thorns and bleeding feet. Legal persecution has been abolished, and bigotry is fast becoming unfashionable. But still we are entangled in a network of social relations and conflicting interests, and he who would be just to all may have to bear the reproach of all. Friendships may have to be renounced, and the dearest affections wounded at the call of truth, and it is still possible to know the meaning of the words, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' Not by withdrawing into a desert from the world and its allurements, but by rising spiritually above them, and holding body and goods at the disposal of God, are we to retain a just judgment; and when with surrendered will we have followed the stern and awful march of truth, we may hope that at our journey's end she will turn and look upon us, and we shall see the beauty of her face.

Party spirit is another force which disturbs the serenity of our judgment. To dispense altogether with parties, especi-

ally in the conduct of affairs, is perhaps neither possible nor desirable. In order to effect large results men must combine, and work together towards a common end ; and he who would keep entirely aloof, and look with cold indifference on struggles that may involve the happiness of cities or of nations, may be neglecting a duty, and showing the temper of a cynic rather than a saint. But the whole of our party life needs to be elevated, and brought from the fetid plain of mutual rancour and jealousy and suspicion on to the breezy uplands of manly generosity, kindly appreciation of unfamiliar good, and the universal courtesy of Christian love. But we must begin with ourselves. If we are sincere, we cannot but be conscious of the influence of party spirit in our own minds, and that we have to treat ourselves with some degree of self-constraint in order to be perfectly just towards those from whom we widely differ. Our love is not yet sufficiently strong. Without love we walk in darkness, and misinterpret our fellow-men ; and truth hides her face from our bitterness and scorn. Love alone sees ; and we obtain this love by seeking not our own will, but the will of him that sent us ; for God is love, and, when his love no longer finds resistance in us, his Spirit enters our hearts, and even the Divine grace of loving our enemies ceases to be impossible.

Again, the bias of education, especially in religion, has a vast influence on mankind. The great majority remain attached to the form of religion in which they have been brought up, and the name of apostate has acquired an evil odour. Yet all these forms cannot be true, and the result of early training must often be to keep men back from truth, and close their eyes against the expanding light. Here, however, the good probably surpasses the evil ; and if ancient error is handed down, so is ancient truth, and the outworn garments still enfold sound and holy principles. It is not every one that can preserve the sacred treasure when the casket is broken ; and in the associations of childhood there is so much that is tender and beautiful that we wish the illusions to pass gently away, and yield

insensibly to the nobler thought of manhood. But 'if we would gain for ourselves a pure organ of discernment, and judge without injustice among conflicting systems of thought, we must learn to recognize our own bias, and to understand, through the revealing power of sympathy, the inner charm of systems which do not naturally attract us. It is not from the eyes of Saul alone that the scales of custom must drop before he can see that beyond the glory of his early faith there is a glory that excels, and that the Spirit which he had persecuted is indeed Divine. We all must put away childish things, and, without any loss of reverence, allow the vivid, but contracted imagination of youth to make way for a larger outlook and a more searching perception of what is in man. And in this transformation we must take care that we do not simply substitute a new bias for the old one. In their revolt against ancient belief men are apt, through the bitterness of disappointment, to hate what once they loved, and to take delight in exposing the folly and meanness of what their fathers venerated. Yet they may be casting away some truth which would appear all the grander when stripped of an adventitious dignity; and, while pluming themselves on their superiority to ancient thought, they may be the victims of their old association of ideas, and be unable to disentangle things that have become connected through the accidents of human culture, and not through the eternal nature of the things themselves. This prejudice of reaction is all the more dangerous because it assumes the guise of candour, and is confident that no impartial men can reject conclusions which appear so obvious to itself. But candour that is self-complacent has already lost its true aroma. Humility is the only soil in which genuine candour grows; and not till we look up, with lowly self-distrust, towards the infinitude of God, and commit ourselves in every thought and purpose to the leading of the higher Will, can we judge justly of the 'little systems' that 'have their day, and cease to be.'

But Christ's words seem to contain a yet higher doctrine.

Who will pretend that no self-will ever obtrudes itself, and clouds his judgment? It may be that if the will were surrendered to God in the absolute self-devotion of love the mind would become, at least in religious things, the clear mirror of his truth; and I cannot help thinking that there is an ideal of spiritual character to which the fulness of spiritual reality would disclose itself, so far at least as human apprehension can grasp these infinite themes. But it is not so with us, and the heavenly radiance streams upon us through earthly mists, revealing some central light, and making visible the direction in which we should go, but exhibiting sometimes no discoverable form, sometimes a shape blurred and blotted by the clouds that flit across it. In lower subjects, where truth can be reached only through the slow accumulation of knowledge, this thought will not apply; and there we must be content if we can keep the intellectual faculties free from the bias of self-will, and direct them with the calm simplicity of an impersonal organ towards their proper ends. No prayer for light will save us from the trouble of conscientious labour, or bring us a miraculous knowledge; but it may woo to our side humility, sympathy, and candour, who will go with us, the angel guardians of our way, and keep us from the slough of self-deception. But can we not find pure and gracious souls in all parties, and must we not then admit that men cry for the light, and no light comes, and truth hides herself from even the most saintly gaze? Not wholly so; for the underlying unity is larger than appears upon the surface. Through the limitations of our earthly mind we are obliged to see truth clad in the drapery of transient thought and knowledge; but in her various guise she still ministers to life and godliness, and speaks through the pure in heart words which, in spite of some commingling of obsolete language, waken undying echoes in consecrated souls. The judgment may be just, though it is not infallible; and we all recognize, in every subject, the men on whom we may depend on account of the noble simplicity of their aims, free from every taint of self-seeking.

They are the men who permanently advance the boundaries of knowledge, or conduct the life of the spirit to a higher level; and if we would follow these, and seek not our own will, but the will of him that sent us, and appointed us our work on earth, we should not indeed escape the liability to err, but we should be delivered more and more from hasty, arrogant, partial, and uncharitable judgments, and ascend above the feverish cries and strife of earthly parties towards that tranquil heaven where truth eternally abides.

*Ἡ κρίσις ἣ ἐμὴ δικάια ἐστίν, ὅτι οὐ ζητῶ τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμόν.*  
(My judgment is just, because I seek not my own will.)

Oh! may I hear thy still, small voice,  
Soft as the summer evening's gale,  
That sighs amid the pine-tree tops  
In this secluded vale.

And as I view the sunset glow  
That broodeth over land and sea,  
And seems to bring the peace of heaven  
In mystic gleams to me,

May my awed soul bow down in prayer  
And all the world's delusions melt,  
While thy eternal being, Lord,  
Within my heart is felt.

Silent be now each craving wild,  
And calm be passion's noisy waves,  
That I may hear the word of truth  
Which sanctifies and saves.

For when my will to thine is given  
In lowly love and clinging trust,  
My ear is open to thy voice,  
And every judgment just.

So let my soul be lulled to rest,  
And tranquil as the folded flower  
That sleeps within the pensive shade  
Of this calm evening hour.

### THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

WHETHER the passage succeeding the verse about just judgment contains an exact record of the words of Christ, or is the writer's own exposition of thoughts which were true to his own experience, and also true, as he believed, to essential elements in Christ's teaching, must be left undetermined. In any case we must remember that Jesus is represented as still on his defence, and a great teacher is not justly chargeable with vanity and egotism when he is forced by his adversaries to declare plainly what he feels to be his function and his message. It has not yet, so far as I know, been alleged that Socrates was a very conceited man because he irritated his judges by his confident assertion of his own merits. In his case it is recognized that he was far too honest and simple, and too truly humble, to ape humility by submitting to its conventional laws.<sup>1</sup> If Jesus felt in his inmost soul that he was commissioned to bring a diviner life into the world, he could not choose but say so, and explain his position, when his religious character was challenged, although he might be met with the angry question, 'Whom makes thou thyself?' And it seems strange that his professing disciples so often place themselves on the side of the Pharisees' misunderstanding and false judgment, and affirm that, if he spoke

<sup>1</sup> Cicero refers to his 'liberam contumaciam, a magnitudine animi ductam, non a superbia.' *Tusc. Qu.*, I. 29, quoted by Riddell, *The Apology of Plato*, Introduction, p. xxvii.

as a man, he was unpardonably arrogant. But leaving this point, we must glance at the leading thoughts of the passage.

The witness of John the Baptist had its value, for he was a man of light and leading, and not likely to be wrong in his estimate of his successor. But the Father's witness was greater, the witness afforded by a life of beneficence and purity. That life was given from on high, and was shaped by the Spirit of God; and all who had the Divine Spirit in themselves, who had heard God's voice within, and had discerned with the eye of the soul the true idea of him, would recognize the blessed and eternal life when it came before them in visible shape. Faith, love, holiness abide within, and are not to be confounded with outward ceremonies and legal precepts, which are only too apt to blind the eyes and harden the heart, so that the Divine reality is lost in the dead conventional form. Men punctilious about the externals of religion, but secretly swayed by their desire for human approbation, and forgetting the glory that God alone can give, cut themselves off from the very sources of faith, and substitute for life in God an empty self-confidence and cruel bigotry. They are unable to understand the spiritual man; but the spiritual man can pierce through their fair exterior, and knows that they have not the love of God in them.

Where is true life to be found? Men who are zealous for the letter of Scripture have a dim longing for eternal life, and believe that they can find it in little oracles, which they interpret with a blind ingenuity. But life resides in persons, not in books; and unless we can pass behind the letter to perceive the living Spirit from which it emanated, it speaks to us in vain, and brings death rather than life. The Scriptures were indeed, to those who had the word of God abiding in them, tremulous with life, the word that spoke through sage and prophet wakening to vivid speech the word within. Those who truly understood them could not misunderstand and reject him who brought to its completion the great prophetic tradition of Israel. For they

bore witness to him, not by a magical forecasting of particular facts, but by their testimony to a life of faith and love, and of intimate communion between God and man, and by their anticipation of the coming of one in whom the holiest dreams of Israel should be realized. So for us the true function of the New Testament is not to impart a miraculous knowledge of dogmas and precepts, but by bearing witness to Christ to bring us to the secret sources and inner meaning of his life. The Word of God for us is not the page of Scripture, but the soul of Christ; and unless we can pass behind the veil of the letter, and enter that living temple of the Holy Spirit, our searching the Scriptures will only sink us into deeper darkness, and surround us with a cloud of self-satisfied dogmatism which no light can penetrate. Belief in Christ may be just as scornful and self-confident as was the Pharisees' belief in Moses, and just as empty of all real and interpreting faith; and if we would truly feel his life-giving power, we must search out the riches of his spirit, till our hearts beat in unison with his, and his serene faith and his holy compassion and love come and make their abode with us. Then will this life bear witness to its own eternity; for we shall know it as the life of God in man, and shall recognize it with piercing glance, however it may manifest itself in ways not of our choosing. The life is the light of men.

Ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχητε. •

(Come to me that ye may have life.)

Oh! but to hear the music of thy voice,  
And, kneeling, bathe thy feet with contrite tears! \*  
Then would my heart in thy great love rejoice,  
And hush to holy calm my faithless fears.

I would not thrust me, Lord, before thy face,  
Or ask that thou should'st turn and look on me:  
Enough for me to know thy truth and grace,  
And breathe my love and thanks, though none should see.



Ashamed I come, yet worshipping that love  
Which first enkindled hope within my heart,  
Which lifted my unhallowed thoughts above,  
And taught me from my low desires to part.

Thou, suffering one, didst breathe forgiveness still,  
And bid me cry to heaven, and never cease,  
Till boundless mercy should my wish fulfil,  
And dull despair make way for radiant peace.

Beloved of my soul, for nought I ask  
But grace to love my Saviour and my friend,  
To bow, rejoicing, to the humblest task,  
And to my Father's will my spirit bend

### LONELY HOURS OF PRAYER.

'Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him a king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.' After a day of bodily fatigue and spiritual disappointment Jesus sought the calm and solitude of night upon the hills. And where could he find a temple so holy as on the hills, beneath the silent stars, when, in the hush of night, the Spirit that pervades all nature spoke to his longing soul, and the infinite deeps of God were revealed through the mysterious lights which age after age had excited the awe and admiration of men? When the moonlight sleeps upon the mountains, a new loveliness steals over the landscape. The cliff so hard and stern in the glare of day is robed in an ethereal tenderness, and objects familiar and obtrusive in the solar light appear as phantom forms, here

looking down upon us with weird and unfamiliar aspect in the pale radiance, there seeming to hide spirits in their soft shadows. It is a time and scene for worship, when beauty dreams upon earth and sky, and the storm and fret of human life are lulled in the holy seclusion of uncorrupted nature. We may well believe that he who was so fond of the mountains, and had an eye for flowers and birds, was not insensible to such influences, but felt the touch of God when the noisy world was asleep, and he was alone upon the hills. On this particular occasion he had deeply stirred the multitude. They had felt the prophet's power in his thrilling words and gracious deeds; but they were blind to the import of what he said, and wished to make him a popular leader, the Messiah of their earthly hopes. Any lower soul might have been tempted by this great success, and cast down his own exalted and pure ideals to be trodden under foot by the crowd, while he himself enjoyed a brief triumph among the great ones of the world. But he was not to be misled by crowds and shouts. He withdrew into the mountain alone, and there rested his weary heart in communion with God; and he may have meditated on that startling discourse which he delivered the following day, in order to sift his followers, and drive off those who had no real sympathy with his purposes, but sought him for the hope of gain, or through an undiscerning and earthly admiration.

We should do well to remember more frequently these lonely hours on the hills. In this bustling and hurrying age there is too little time for retirement and meditation. The world, with its toil for the meat that perishes, with its cares and its pleasures, presses upon us on every side, and it is difficult to secure 'still hours' when we may open the eyes of the spirit to behold things spiritual and eternal. To say that excessive devotion to worldly business or enjoyment must be prejudicial to the health of religion would be almost a truism. But the action of such excess is very subtle; and without its ever amounting to anything which we can morally condemn, it may gradually sap the

finest elements of character. We may begin with an idea which appeals to very noble sentiments, that religion consists in the fulfilment of social duties,—a proposition with about as much truth in it as that a tree consists of fruit. It thence follows that meditation and prayer should occupy quite a subordinate position, and whenever the pressure of work is great there is no reason for attending to these ancient practices. Thus the inclination for worship is worn away by degrees. The personal experience of communion is lost, and every idle objection to prayer acquires the force of a serious argument, for we have no immoveable facts within our own souls to oppose to the sceptic's doubt. Finally we begin to think it weak and childish to spend a portion of each day in retirement, that our souls may meet the infinite Creator in awful communion, that we may lay down every desire in filial submission to him, entreat his mercy for the failures of our love, and in humility learn what is his will concerning us. Thus our view of the relative importance of the material and the spiritual becomes inverted. We seek first the kingdom of the world and its maxims, and fancy that the kingdom of God and his righteousness will be added to us at some future time. We may still be honest and conscientious men, for moral principles may be established in us too firmly to be rooted out; or we may sink down, fixing our affections upon lower and lower objects, till a worldly, flippant, and selfish tone pervades all our thoughts and deeds. If we once allow ourselves to drift away from God, we must sail upon a shoreless ocean, till the abyss opens, and we enter the dark mysteries of death and eternity. In God all things are beautiful and full of meaning; away from him they are a delusive picture, perishing signs which fools mistake for undying realities. In Him is our strength; in solemn silence and peace we must seek his face.

In cultivating religion itself with all fidelity we may allow the practical tendency to usurp too prominent a place. Religion impels us to communicate to others, to

do good, to help our less favoured brethren. Christ went about doing good, and beneficence enters very deeply into the religion which he taught. But if we confine our attention to this aspect of his character we fall immeasurably short of the truth. We are indeed told little of his private habits ; but we hear of his retiring into deserted places that he might rest, of his desire to pray alone, of his continuing all night in prayer. And if we would understand his marvellous power over the world, we must seek it, not in a few years' toil, however strenuous, but in the spirit which prompted his toil, in the inward life which he drew from communion with his Father. In religious work it is not the persistence of exertion, however needful, but the depth of sincerity and love that achieves the grandest results. The exhausting effort of one man moves us less than the simplest words of another. Only a soul lost in adoration can teach us how to pray ; and only a heart which has owned the supremacy of truth can bring the truth home to the hearts of others. Without the Father we can do nothing ; and severed from that eternal life to which we are called we wither like branches cut from the parent tree. To religious health and power rest and solitude are indispensable. It is when the head is bowed, and the eyes closed, and the soul caught away from all thought or feeling of earth, that self is vanquished, and the secret things of God are made manifest. He, and he alone, can stir the depths in his fellow-men who in communion with God has trodden self under foot, and from that lonely battle with evil in himself comes to them triumphant in faith, and filled with the power of the Spirit. It is such men who are moved with a divine compassion towards the multitudes wandering as sheep not having a shepherd, and whose little store of spiritual bread, hardly enough to support themselves when they forget Him in whom all souls must live, will be filled with a supernatural energy, and satisfy the cravings of thousands.

## Lonely Hours of Prayer

Ὡς δὲ ὀψία ἐγένετο.

(When evening came.)

O star of evening, lovely as the queen  
Who rose translucent from the Cyprian sea,  
In robes ethereal, of golden sheen,  
To shed her lustre over flood and lea,

To me thou speak'st of purity and peace,  
Of sainted souls who worship God alone  
In fairer worlds, where mortal troubles cease,  
And angels sing before God's radiant throne.

Beneath thee sleep the solitary hills ;  
And while dim shadows climb their silent slopes,  
A Presence, not of earth, my spirit fills,  
And draws towards heaven my aspiring hopes.

With Christ, in nature's shrine I prayerful kneel ;  
My passions own the mystic touch of night ;  
To my rapt soul God doth himself reveal ;  
And thou dost shine, an altar's holy light.

Shine on, O evening star, in splendour shine,  
And let thy beams God's purity declare ;  
Flood with thy brilliance this dark heart of mine,  
That it at last thy loveliness may share.

Ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος.

(He withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.)

O silent, lonely tarn,  
Asleep within the mountain's breast,  
Thou seemest, from the world so far withdrawn,  
To dream of rest.

So, deep within my heart,  
There is a silent, lonely cell,  
Where I may rest, and worship God, and feel  
That all is well.

## BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

THE discourse about the bread that comes down out of heaven contains metaphor which to us is unfamiliar, and sounds harsh; and in it Jesus puts forward claims which have been objected to as egotistic and presumptuous. In regard to the latter point we may observe that even if the address be given from a genuine recollection, it is nevertheless not improbable that it is a good deal coloured by the profound spiritual experience of the Evangelist, and he may have made explicit in the language of Jesus what was really his own interpretation of that kindling life. But we must also remember the circumstances. Jesus had to guard himself against grievous misunderstanding, and to do so not by disclaimers of what the people regarded as a supreme honour, but by setting forth higher claims in opposition to popular expectations. The multitude came to him in an unspiritual frame of mind, full of worldly ambition, and eager for the festive indulgence of the Messianic time. There were opponents too, demanding a sign, and asking for the manna which the Messiah was to give. But Jesus had no sign of that kind to display; he had no manna to bestow; he had only himself to offer, with all the fulness of his life in God, a life eternal and Divine, far unlike the manna of the wilderness, which satisfied a momentary hunger, but stayed not the hand of death; and if the people could not recognize the bread out of heaven in himself, and feel that it was far above all earthly joys and powers, he had nothing else to give them; he would not be their earthly king; and if they were offended, he must go up once more into his own solitary communion with God.

Though this is not a commentary, we may refer to a few expressions which throw some light on the meaning of the chapter. Lightfoot, in his 'Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations,' quotes some interesting rabbinical parallels. R. Hillel said, 'Messiah is not likely to come to Israel, for they have already devoured him in the days of Heze-

kiah.' The Midrash Coheleth (fol. 86, 4) states, 'The former Redeemer caused Manna to descend for them; in like manner shall our latter Redeemer cause Manna to come down, as it is written, there shall be a handful of corn in the earth.' In the Talmud, Sanhedrim, it is written, 'The generation in the wilderness have no part in the world to come, neither shall they stand in judgment.' and Lightfoot explains the raising in the last day in opposition to this,—those who feed on me shall have part in the world to come.

The expression 'came down out of heaven' receives some illustration from the following passages. Jesus asked whether the baptism of John was out of heaven or of men,<sup>1</sup> and said of Capernaum, 'Shalt thou be exalted to heaven? thou shalt go down to hades.'<sup>2</sup> Paul speaks of being caught up into the third heaven.<sup>3</sup> Philo describes the mind as 'having come down from heaven,' when it leaves the pure service of God, and becomes bound by the necessities of the body.<sup>4</sup> Origen says that he who contemplates wisdom ascends from the knowledge of wisdom to its Father.<sup>5</sup> In modern times Beha Ullah, the 'Blessed Perfection' of the Bábís, speaking apparently in the name of God, says, 'O Son of Man! ascend to My Heaven that thou mayest come near to Me, that thou mayest drink from the Pure Wine which has no likeness,—from the Everlasting Cup of Glory.'<sup>6</sup> More literal, and perhaps connected with the doctrine of pre-existence, is the statement in Ecclesiastes, 'The spirit shall return to God who

<sup>1</sup> Ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων. Matthew xxi. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 23, μὴ ἕως οὐρανοῦ ὑψωθήσῃ; ἕως ᾧδου καταβήσῃ. So Isaiah had said of the king of Babylon, οὐ δὲ εἶπας. . . . Εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναβήσομαι. . . . νῦν δὲ εἰς ᾧδην καταβήσῃ. xiv. 13, 15.

<sup>3</sup> II Cor. xii. 2-4.

<sup>4</sup> Καταβὰς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ. *Quis rer. div. her.*, 16 and 55, I. 484 and 512.

<sup>5</sup> Ὁ θεωρῶν τὴν σοφίαν . . . ἀναβαίνει ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐγνωκέαι τὴν σοφίαν ἐπὶ τὸν πατέρα αὐτῆς. *Com. in Joan.*, Tom. xix. 1, p. 149 Lom.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from the Arabic in *The Life and Teaching of Abbas Effendi*, by Myron H. Phelps, 1903, p. 247.

gavè it '1; and, 'Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward?' '2

The main thesis of the discourse is that which pervades the whole Gospel, and indeed the New Testament generally, —that true religion is the indwelling of a Divine and eternal life of communion with God, and that this life was brought into the world by Christ, and is imparted by the transmission of spiritual energy from a soul already possessed of it. The true Christian is not one who repeats creeds or observes ceremonies, though these may have their place, but one whose soul feeds upon the very substance of Christ's life, incorporating his holy faith and love and obedience, and rising with him, not only above the world and its selfishness, but above the paltry superstitions of men into that which they dimly symbolized, the light and life of God. This is the life which is manifested in the true Son of God, and which is given to all who behold it with eyes of faith. This faith, when it comes, is its own witness, and asks for no proof. We cannot prove that some glorious scene in nature is beautiful; we can only gaze, ravished with the great revealing; and if any man fail to discern the beauty, no words will disclose it till the eye of the spirit is opened. And so the beautiful life of a surrendered will, and of loving fellowship with God and man, reveals itself directly to the prepared soul, and no doubt can obscure the blessedness of that vision; but if men, sunk in the habits of the world or the empty customs of religion, fail to see its transcendent loveliness, we cannot prove it to them. No man can come to it except the Father draw him. It sounds paradoxical to say that only the Father can bring us to Christ, while it is Christ who brings us to the Father. Yet so it is. In Christ we see the eternal love made manifest, and come to know God as our Father; and yet we cannot come to Christ, and own the appeal of

<sup>1</sup> Τὸ πνεῦμα ἐπιστρέφῃ [בְּשֵׁחַ] πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ὃς ἔδωκεν αὐτό.  
xii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Τίς εἶδε πνεῦμα υἱῶν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, εἰ ἀναβαίνει αὐτὸ εἰς ἄνω.  
iii. 21.



his love, unless there is some preparedness of heart, some intimations of higher possibilities than we have known, some secret leading towards the light. It is a serious thought that the leading may be there, and we may disregard it; that God's love may be ever at our side, pleading with us in accents soft and still, which we stifle in the vain tumult of selfish passions. But for those who are willing to listen there are those secret monitions in the hidden part. God never leaves himself without a witness; his hand is put forth to lead, and the silent, waiting soul may hear his voice out of the cloud, saying, as of old, 'This is my beloved Son.' And there, upon the mount of transfiguration, we look forth upon a glorified world, filled with the presence of God; all things become new, and, as though endowed with a new sense, we gaze upon an altered universe. This is the great gift of Christ, the communication, according to our capacity, of his own insight and life in God. Notwithstanding his compassion for the sufferings and sorrows of men, he did not supply miraculous manna to feed the body, but gave himself in uttermost self-surrender, even to the offering of his flesh and blood upon the cross, that the souls of men might be fed, and, full of spiritual health, they might look beyond the bounds of time, and rest in the peace of God.

Christ's emphatic enunciation of a purely spiritual purpose disappointed and drove away those who had followed him through unworthy motives. They sneered at his figurative language, and cared not for a Messiah who had nothing to offer but his own exalted spirituality, and repudiation of the world and its ambitions. Men leave him now for the same reason; but the manner of leaving is different. *Then* to follow him was to reject the world and its ways, and to encounter the fierce opposition of established religion. *Now* the profession of his follower involves no self-denial, and it is he who stands aloof that is in danger of persecution; for it is the fashion to call oneself by his name. But men may shout his praise and repeat the creeds while their heart is far from him,

and a vast amount of conventional Christianity is nothing but emptiness and vanity. We leave him, not when we reverently form opinions about him which men choose to call heretical, not even when, in revolt from the hollowness of a so-called Christendom, we stand outside, and refuse to bear a name which no longer expresses our highest ideal, but when we refuse the touch of his spirit, and the principles by which we govern our lives are opposed to his. True Christianity is known by the clinging of the heart to that spirit of sonship which dwelt in Christ, and the humble yielding of ourselves day by day to its indwelling power. It is known by the love, joy, and peace, which, drawn from the fountain of all life, abide within, and manifest themselves in words and deeds of purity and kindness. It is the saints who walk in the white robes of righteousness, and with holy simplicity love and serve their brethren, that Christ will acknowledge as his own; for they have fed upon the very substance of his life, and repeat the manifestation of his spirit in the world.

To whom, then, shall we go? for no greater leader has been offered to mankind. Is it said that we need no leader, for every soul has access by one spirit to the Father? Be it so. But reverence, gratitude, and love, the drawing of the Father, bring us to Christ's feet; and the one Spirit leaves not our souls alone, but binds us in a great brotherhood, at whose head is the first-born among these many brethren, and in reverent communion with whom the gift of the Spirit is continually renewed. When he dwells in the heart by faith, we overcome the world, and enter the life which abides eternally, and which flows for ever from God into the souls of those who will receive it, and who wait in humble trust and prayer for the Divine gift.

It has been suggested that this allegiance to one particular teacher has a narrowing effect upon the mind, which ought to be open to all high teaching, and to honour all the great prophets of God. It is a possible danger, but one that is not operative in reality. The Christian has always found spiritual nourishment in Isaiah and Paul

and John, and a long succession of saints who have left their thoughts and lives as a legacy to the world; and in the Christian Church's most enthusiastic days the voice of Plato was not unheard, and the indebtedness of mankind to Greek philosophy was frankly recognized. More recently we have begun to listen to the wisdom of Oriental sages, and to perceive that all round the world God has never left himself without a witness. The fact is, the spirit of Christ is inclusive, not exclusive, and they who have truly fed upon that spirit can hear the sons of God shouting for joy in every age and clime. But, on the other hand, a mere eclectic salutation to all sorts of wise teachers may quite fail to touch the affections and communicate that moral power which we need in our conflict with the world. And herein lies the benefit of a supreme allegiance to one great leader, believed by Christians to be the greatest. He can warm the heart with love, and dwell there as a life-giving spirit; and the vow of fidelity to him, supported and kept in memory by a great cloud of witnesses, creates a moral exaltation and a strength of resolve which enable men to stand fast in the evil day, and to shape their earthly course by Divine principles. And if it be true that in imparting the fervid power of faith and love Christ does not cut us off from, but rather brings us into communion with, the sages and prophets of the world, so neither does devotion to himself remove us from the worship of the supreme Holiness. Nay, he teaches us how to pray, and, having led us up the mount of vision, leaves us alone with God. For he brings us to the Father through the indwelling of the eternal life in himself, and we strain our eyes no more for a distant and unknown God, but discern in the midst of our humanity the Source of all life and light, in whom we live and move and have our being. Thus the soul expands towards both God and man, and far from finding in Christ and his teaching a poverty-stricken and cramping dogmatism, discerns in him unsearchable riches of spiritual revealing, and a fulness of the Spirit, Divine and human. We cannot, then, leave him in order

to wander at large in the pastures of the world's wisdom; but, with his love in our hearts, and his purity of conscience to discern good and ill, we welcome every grace that God's holy ones may bring us, and gladly find ourselves members of a universal brotherhood of the good. Let us not deceive ourselves with vain words. We must partake of the substance of that life for the nourishment of our souls: for cries of Lord, Lord, will avail us nothing; 'If a man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

### THE CRITERION OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH.

How shall we distinguish, in ourselves and others, the utterances of Divine wisdom from those of clever human opinion? How shall we know the true prophet, while we dismiss the self-confident pretender? In the sermon on the mount Christ lays down a very simple rule,—'By their fruits ye shall know them.' But, simple as it is, this rule involves a good deal in regard to human nature; for it implies that we intuitively discern the fruit which is good and that which is bad, and that we can easily recognize the kind of life that is indicative of noble character. In the Fourth Gospel this principle is traced to its spiritual roots. Our discernment may be at fault, as Jesus himself so painfully experienced; for though he gave so many signs of the true prophet and Son of God, prejudice and dogmatism blinded the eyes of the religious men of his time. It is possible for us, therefore, to misread the plainest signs, and effective discernment must depend on something in ourselves. 'If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching.' But here again there is room for error. The enemies of Jesus looked upon their law as a complete expression of God's will, and tried to observe it with all scrupulosity; and yet this willing and running on their part only heightened their misunder-

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standing and their enmity. This kind of willingness may be full of pride and presumption; but the genuine willingness to do the will of God implies a calm and humble temper of mind, a pure self-abnegation, a surrender of all the faculties to the highest which is known, a seeking not of our own glory, but the glory of him that sent us. Then we have an affinity with the teaching which comes from God, and recognize its Divine accents, and the deep sincerity of the man who proclaims it. Who that has searched his own motives does not know how difficult and far-reaching is this rule, and how even an assumed humility and zeal for the glory of God may be a cloak for pride and arrogance?

But while the surrender of the will enables us to hear God's voice in our own hearts, and to recognize its tones in another, it does not reveal facts or doctrines which must be ascertained and tested by the appointed methods of the intellect. Truth, in this Gospel, is a thing that can be practised, and therefore refers, not to metaphysical dogma, about which good men may widely differ, but to great spiritual principles which express themselves in a just and noble character. The beatitudes, the parable of the good Samaritan or of the prodigal son, the description of love by St. Paul, and similar utterances, excite the admiration and command the allegiance of those who are sincerely willing to do the will of God, and such men know that these are not the offspring of human ambition or showy cleverness, but come from the deep wells of truth within the consecrated soul. Even the highest prophet may be mistaken as to matters of fact or abstruse doctrines, though he knows with absolute assurance the justice and holiness and love of God, just as a man may be ignorant or mistaken about many things relating to a friend whom he knows and loves, and yet may trust absolutely the character which has been revealed to him in a thousand subtle ways. So we need not be dismayed if it should be proved that Jesus accepted some erroneous opinions of his countrymen; for these are things that lie outside the sphere of inspira-

tion, and those who are at one with him in the simplicity of self-dedication know that the great principles of his teaching are Divine, and that he spoke not from himself, with a view to his own glory, but uttered the word of God which rose irrepressibly to his lips.

Grant, O Father, that we may seek not our own glory, but thine alone. May the world and self never come between us and thee, but with the holy simplicity of Christ may we listen for thy word ; with single eye may we discern thy truth ; and with pure heart may we cherish it ; so that in the stillness and quietude of our souls we may have communion with thee, and, having ever clearer revelations of thy will, we may speak and act, not from ourselves, but under the leading of thy Spirit. So may we follow the Beloved into the kingdom of thy sons.

O Truth, pure offspring of the light  
That kindles round the throne of God,  
Thou dwellest on the radiant height  
Where mortal feet have never trod.  
And beauty, from her mystic shrine,  
Steps forth to place her hand in thine ;  
While goodness comes, with bashful tread,  
And lays a diadem upon thy queenly head.

Encircled with thy golden rays  
Thou seek'st a home in every heart,  
Too dazzling far for human gaze  
To apprehend thee as thou art.  
But lowly worshippers can find  
A mirror in the reverent mind,  
Wherein they see thy ardent beams  
Subdued and softened into dim and trembling gleams.

As some calm sea reflects the forms  
Of cloud or tree or mountain peak,  
But, when disturbed by gathering storms,  
Or wrapped in fog of winter bleak,

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No more reveals to down-cast eyes  
The loveliness of earth and skies,  
But hides within its sullen breast  
The beauties which are now by waves and mist oppressed,

So in the mirror of the soul,  
When passions rude are lulled to sleep,  
And reverence, with her mild control,  
Doth in the heart her vigil keep,  
The vision fair, though dimly seen,  
Disclosing still thy gracious mien,  
Attracts, with awe, the ravished sight,  
And tells of other worlds where all is pure and bright.

But oft the mind is sore beset  
With storms that foul that mirror clear,  
And, scattered by its surface fret,  
Rough fragments of thy form appear ;  
Or creeping mists of self arise,  
And hide the vision from our eyes ;  
And while, by passion led, we stray,  
We cannot see thy face, nor own thy regal sway.

Oh ! that my heart's wild sea might rest,  
Asleep beneath God's lulling will,  
And calm, as in some sainted breast  
Abideth love serene and still ;  
And then, as in a tranquil tide,  
Would thy pure image be descried,  
And every feature be revealed  
Which selfish gloom or passion's rage has long concealed.

Then should I joy in freedom's smile,  
And trample sin beneath my feet,  
That tyrant who, supreme awhile,  
Mised my will with dark deceit.  
For when the Son of God makes free,  
We walk in spacious liberty,  
No more in falsehood's thralldom stray,  
But, O redeeming Truth, with trust we own thy sway.

## KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHT.

THE Jews knew Jesus, and knew whence he was ; and therefore, they concluded, he could not be the Christ. The Christ must come in some mysterious way, and surely could not be a carpenter from a little mountain village. The very knowledge which they had of him prevented them from discerning the hidden man of the heart, the Divine deeps behind that familiar form. So it may be with us. We may know whence he was, the scenes amid which he grew up, the religious and political conditions of his time, the character and mutual relations of the documents which contain the records of his ministry ; and all our knowledge and clever criticism may leave us completely blind to the inner springs of his life, and his profound consciousness of having a Divine message to deliver to the world. He did not come of himself, but was sent ; he did not speak from his own wisdom, but listened to the voice of the Father within him, and knew that that voice was true ; and as he heard he spoke, and because he sought not his own glory his words abide, kindling the hearts of men. It is not through much learning, but through the simplicity of faith that we know these things. We must see how empty are the pomp and rank of the world, and understand that one whose father and mother, whose modest home and lowly calling we know may be the Lord Christ ; and it is when, renouncing the world and its vain judgments, we sit humbly at his feet, that his words drop like balm on our wounded hearts, and we rest within the Divine Love that sent him. And then from us too, according to our faith, flow streams of living water ; for, in glorifying him, we receive of his Spirit, and become partakers of his life.

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## FREEDOM AND SERVITUDE.

It must, I think, be admitted that the eighth chapter of our Gospel is more than usually open to the objections which are brought against the Johannine representations of Christ. The exclusiveness of self-assertion is most strongly marked, and the attack on his opponents is not softened by 'the meekness and gentleness' which were among his characteristic traits. It may well be that the ardent faith and vehement antipathies of the evangelist have coloured the language, or even that he has reduced to literary form, and assigned to a special occasion, the substance of the permanent controversy between Christ and his disciples on the one side and their Jewish persecutors on the other. Nevertheless, we must not forget that, according to the Synoptics, the meekness of Christ did not prevent a burning indignation against wrong, and especially against the blindness of religious assumption. The denunciations here are not more vehement than those in Matthew xxiii. ; and Mark tells us that he looked round with anger at those who objected to his healing on the sabbath.<sup>1</sup> And in regard to self-assertion, we must once more remark that he is not claiming any of that personal honour which the ambitious love, but speaking under the overwhelming conviction that he has been entrusted with a Divine message of supreme importance to the world, and that his judgments are rooted, not in the ephemeral distinctions which men blindly establish, but in the eternal reality of things. And so he flings conventionality to the winds. He demands a hearing ; he knows that God has spoken within his soul ; he has the truth which alone can redeem ; and if his nation rejects him, and will not hear his word, it must perish in the sin which holds it captive. Isaiah spoke with similar conviction ; and all great reformers must have something of this temper. Nothing but an absolute assurance that they are right could enable them to fulfil their task. Paradoxical as it may sound,

<sup>1</sup> Mark iii. 5.

they assert themselves simply because they utterly forget themselves, and social rules of modesty and self-depreciation never occur to them. And so, not through self-confidence, but through their confidence in God, they proclaim the truth that wields them, and, caring nothing for the power of opposition, match their solitary might against the marshalled forces of the world. But of course this seems like shocking arrogance to the decorous walkers in well-trodden paths, who never have felt the fire of God burning in their hearts.

But whatever may have been the precise form of Christ's own declarations, his disciples felt that he had been to them a Redeemer, who had led them out of captivity into genuine freedom. We must distinguish between outward and inward freedom. The former is valuable only as it ministers to the latter; and men of large views, the patriot and the reformer, have striven and suffered for political and religious liberty, not that they might have an open field for the exercise of self-will, but because systems of coercion prevent the natural growth of the mind, and crush those higher impulses which are God's drawing of the soul to himself. But freedom from injurious restraint may be fully secured, while, nevertheless, the soul fails to enter on its birthright, and knows nothing of 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God.' And, on the other hand, the soul may move in God-given freedom while chains hang heavy on the limbs. We may never have been in bondage to any man; but whosoever sins is the slave of sin. Sin assumes many forms, and each man must learn from his own conscience where he is most open to attack, or where he is actually suffering from cares and sorrows and fears that would fly before a perfect trust and humble consecration to the Divine will. But one very subtle kind of sin is here attacked. It is bigotry, a sin which is condemned as of the very essence of satan, producing, as it has always done, falsehood and murder, and yet so wily and deceitful, because it persuades its wretched victim that he is full of zeal for the honour of God. Bigotry, indeed, assumes some of

the attributes, and may perhaps be described as the dark side, of religion. It is in fact, slavery to opinion, and while the soul is pluming itself on its virtue it is in reality bleeding to death under the lash of arrogance and hatred. It makes men deaf to the voice of truth, blind to the manifestations of goodness, the enemies of progress, the persecutors of prophets, and the crucifiers of the Christ. It is needless to say that it stole into Christendom under imperial patronage, and has reigned there with unexampled ferocity. It is the very spirit of anti-christ, decked with the name and titles of the Redeemer. Happily the hideous dream is dissolving, and the pure and gentle light of Christ's gospel is slowly dawning on the world. He is coming, to bring, through the might of his Spirit, liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to gather mankind together, a great brotherhood of the children of God, into the Father's house.

The truth will make us free; the truth, of course, not of mere fact or opinion, but truth of spiritual discernment, the clear apprehension of the reality and the fatherhood of God, and our own filial relation to him. This is the kind of truth that comes from faith in Christ and abiding in his word. It is not by prescribed ceremonies, or by laborious and artificial methods of self-discipline, that we become free from the dark superstitions, the wearing anxieties, the desolating passions, that afflict mankind, but through the inflowing of the filial life which we experience in fellowship with Christ, through the kindling of high desire, through an awakened love whereby we dwell in God and God in us. The weary and heavy laden find their burden lightened through childlike trust, and sin is overcome through the resting of the heart in God. It is thus that the Son makes us free, by communicating his own spirit; for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. In the might of that Spirit we are no longer slaves, but sons, and, folded in the eternal love, we shall abide in the Father's house for ever. Herein is the great distinction of genuine Christianity. It is not an outward conformity to ritual

or dogma, which can never take away sin, but an inward spirit of life, which is the opposite of sin and breaks its power. The slave may abide for a time in the Father's house; but gradually the fetters of custom and opinion blind his eyes and harden his heart, and the kingdom of God passes from him; and only he who, in the fulness of freedom, is led by the Spirit of God remains within that kingdom, though churches may excommunicate him, and cast out his name as evil for the Son of Man's sake. For the citizen of heaven the earthly way may be painful; but it is the path of true liberty, and ends in the light and beatitude of God.

Ἐὰν οὖν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ, ὅντως ἐλεύθεροι ἔσεσθε.

(If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.)

O Liberty, how oft hast thou  
 Been fettered with the tyrant's chain;  
 And still I see thy hallowed brow  
 Contracted with indignant pain.  
 For patriots pine in dungeon's gloom;  
 The righteous wait a felon's doom;  
 The prophet's voice with blood is choked,  
 And still in vain are men's God-given rights invoked.

Yet, Liberty, in thy blest name  
 Foul deeds are done, and brutal crimes;  
 And, while we pity, we must blame  
 The madness of these latter times.  
 For God's high justice never can  
 Be furthered by the wrath of man;  
 And who takes vengeance for his wrongs  
 Usurps the retribution which to God belongs.

Far harder than the tyrant's bonds,  
 More deadly than his rage, is sin,  
 The selfish heart that ne'er responds  
 To God's calm voice, which pleads within.

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The man who suffers wrong may be  
Unbound in soul, in conscience free.  
The tyrant, from whom wrongs proceed,  
Sits on a phantom throne, and is a slave indeed.

Who sinneth is the slave of sin ;  
And though he never bowed the knee  
To man's control, he cannot win  
The golden guerdon of the free.  
He sighs for peace, but sighs in vain ;  
Himself has forged the heavy chain ;  
He wastes his strength in passion's fires,  
And wears the servile brand of his own base desires.

The freedmen of the Son of God  
Alone can see thy gracious smile ;  
And while they tread earth's lowly sod,  
Pure thoughts of thee their way beguile.  
Christ's spirit in their hearts doth tell  
Of worlds where God's beloved dwell ;  
And while, within, hope sweetly sings,  
Their souls, O Liberty, fly upward on thy wings.

### CHRIST'S CONCEPTION OF HIS MISSION.

THERE is no man so uninteresting and devoid of originality that we should not receive instruction if we could penetrate the inmost recesses of his soul, and read there the secret of his life. Every man has within him, perhaps unknown to himself, a hidden shrine, a holy of holies (sometimes alas ! a desecrated holy of holies), before which hangs a veil ; and this veil can be passed only by the high-priests of humanity, who, with the large sympathy of a profound insight, can interpret the mysterious silence of that solemn sanctuary. Yet there are degrees in this

obscurity, and in proportion as the soul is exalted in the simplicity of righteousness, and impelled by one disinterested motive, the veil becomes transparent, at least to those who have in their hearts something akin to this diviner life. Thus it is that the prophet, who knows what is in man, also reveals the secret of his own activity, and, in proclaiming laws of life for mankind, admits us to his own most private consciousness. So it was in the case of Christ. His is the most luminous soul in history; and it is not without reason that there has been a tendency in modern times to revert to the consciousness of Jesus as the central fane from which the oracles of revelation are delivered. This principle has been used too much with a view to the establishment of some metaphysical dogma of Christ's person,—precisely the region where it must be least fruitful,—and too little in order to discover the highest rule of life, and the relation of all men to their Creator.

The narrative of the healing of the blind man contains one of those self-revealing utterances, which proclaim at the same time a challenge to mankind:—'We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' Whether we regard the words as an exact record of what Christ actually said, or as the author's interpretation of what he meant and expressed generally through his life and teaching, the spiritual lesson remains the same. But it seems to me that in this instance the saying bears the stamp of genuineness, in that it is so perfectly human. 'The night cometh when no man can work.' This does not correspond with the view of the Church, that Christ, after his ascension, was actively engaged in the world's affairs, and would soon return in person to assume his kingdom. It expresses the earnestness of a man who thought that he had only a brief opportunity, and looked forward to the close of life as the end of his labours for the world. Whether it was spoken precisely in the circumstances which are here related, or whether

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the narrative is a kind of parable, telling of the removal of spiritual blindness, is a question which need not now be discussed. We must confine our attention to the words themselves, as admitting us to one of the central principles of Christ's activity.

The deepest thought in this saying is that of being sent. Jesus felt that he was not his own, to follow his own will or seek his own pleasure, but had been placed in the world by a higher Power, in order to accomplish a Divine purpose. In other words, he felt his entire dependence upon God, to whom he owed an absolute allegiance. The unfailing consciousness of God, who had appointed his place and work in the service of mankind, who unveiled visions of truth within his soul, and whose love glowed in his heart,—this was the central principle, which dwelt in him with such convincing power that it kindled the faith of other men, and revealed within them deeper things than they had felt or known. This characteristic, the sense of living in God, of God's living in him, is sufficiently clear in the first three Gospels; but it is all pervading in the fourth. The grandeur of his personality is there represented as due to the completeness of his dependence upon God, and his profound conviction that a Son of Man was in his inmost being a Son of God. He, precisely because he had the immovable consciousness of sonship, felt that he, the Son, could of himself do nothing. As the Father had life in himself, so he had *given* to the Son to have life in himself; not the restless craving and striving that men call life, but the deep calm flood of Divine power, which poured its refreshing stream into the hearts of other men, and revived the souls that lay dead in error and sin. The truth which he spoke he had heard in his communion with God. He said nothing for his own glory, but uttered only what the Spirit had breathed in the hallowed temple of his heart. His active life was not his own, but expressed the life of the indwelling Father. It was this Divine gift of unflinching faith that made him victorious in the midst of apparent defeat. The night was to come when he could no longer

work; but the seed, buried and dishonoured, becomes a glorious plant; and when his body hung dishonoured on the cross, and his spirit passed to a yet nearer communion of eternal love, the work which God wrought through him could not perish; and, not in spite of, but by means of the appealing anguish of persecution and death the timeless spirit of truth and righteousness which abode in him abides among us still.

This closeness of communion with God did not cause him to withdraw from the world, and spend his days in lonely contemplation, but rather impelled him, when the time was come, to throw himself with overmastering earnestness into the work of a religious teacher, so that in him the contemplative and the practical life were harmoniously combined. There were indeed those silent years, of which no record is preserved, in which he grew from childhood to mature manhood; and we can only conjecture that, while he wrought at his trade, and shared the common joys and sorrows of the little town where he lived, his consciousness of the Divine presence was growing ever deeper and clearer, till at last, having heard the cry of the Baptist, he could refrain no longer, but went forth as a teacher of righteousness, calling men to a spiritual worship, and to the mutual service of love. The days of preparation were over, and his hour had come. From the obscure industry of the carpenter's workshop he felt himself summoned to work in the field of humanity, and to quit the peaceful life of silent adoration for the strenuous and dangerous toil of one who had a reformer's mission to fulfil. Nevertheless, his absorption in his work did not lead him to forget that the spiritual value of work depends on the Divine purity of the life within, and that this can be maintained only through communion with God. Thus his profound sense of the Fatherhood of God at once lifted his soul in worship and sent him forth upon the arduous path of duty: 'I must work the works of him that sent me'; 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me'; 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I



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straitened till it be accomplished.' We read in, these words the intense and unselfish earnestness of his purpose; and this earnestness sprang from duty glorified by faith. Duty was for him no abstract sense of oppressive obligation, nor even the 'stern daughter of the voice of God,' but came in melting tones from the Father, whose will was always loving as it was holy. The true Son of God could only listen in rapt devotion, and feel it as a high privilege to share the redeeming purposes of God, and commit himself absolutely to the guidance of his Spirit; and to him, the lowly Son of Man, it seemed that the commandments of duty came, as in the ancient story, like angels of God, ascending and descending, carrying aloft the human aspiration, and bringing down a message of love and peace from the opened heavens.

The nature of the duty which Christ thus felt to be laid upon him has been already indicated; but we must view a little more closely the words by which it is expressed,— 'When I am in the world, I am the (or, I think, with a more correct translation, 'a') light of the world.' We may read in this exclamation the secret of an overburdened heart. From what very different sentiments the same words may spring! and a reference to some exalted function, though verbally the same, may express either an overweening self-esteem or a deep and humble sense of duty to be fulfilled. In the present passage there is a delicate distinction in the Greek, which it is impossible to present in an English translation. In this Gospel the personal pronoun 'I' is frequently emphatic; but here it is so far from being emphatic that it is represented only by the form of the verb, and the pronoun itself is absent. I think, therefore, that we are quite justified in supposing that Christ may have addressed such language to his intimate friends and disciples, not because he was full of vain pretensions, but as indicating the nature of the work which he had been sent to accomplish. It is as though he said within himself, 'To give light to this darkened world is the work which God has laid upon me; and how terrible

it would be if, through fear or idleness, I shrank from the task to which he has sent me, and sunk back into selfish darkness. While it is day I must work his holy will, and keep my heart pure from earthly clouds.'

And now we must dwell for a moment on the significance of the words. They indicate Christ's own conception of his Divine mission. It was to bring light to the darkened understanding and conscience of men. Great spiritual truths, which had been hidden from the wise and prudent, had been revealed within him; and in the solitude which besets the grandest and most original minds, he felt that he, and he alone at that time, had a divine message of the highest import to communicate to mankind. Not, we may well believe, till after years of prayer and thought and humble self-examination, did he come forth to speak those words which swayed the multitudes as with some new prophetic fire; which roused to fury the conservative sticklers for unspiritual and perishing modes of thought and worship; which gladdened the hearts of those who were looking wistfully for brighter days, and dropped like balm on the wounds of those who were sitting in the darkness of sin and sorrow. Other sayings have been recorded which reveal the same conception of his mission. Near the beginning of Mark's Gospel he is said to have proposed to go into the neighbouring villages in order to preach, for it was for this purpose that he had come forth. In the parable of the sower he not obscurely compares himself as a teacher to the husbandman scattering his seed with lavish hand, to bear fruit or to perish according to the soil on which it fell. And in the closing scene before Pilate our Evangelist records this solemn declaration, 'I have been born for this purpose, and for this purpose have I come into the world, that I may bear witness to the truth.'

But there is yet another sense in which Christ was the light of the world. The life is the light of men, and it was the indwelling life which flooded the truth with radiance. It was this that gave to his words that power which belongs only to deep conviction and first-hand knowledge of

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spiritual things. Here was a man who spoke what he had heard and seen in hours of high communion, and whose whole being bowed down before the truth with which his heart was full. That truth sparkled in his eyes, and gleamed from his face ; it laid its commanding spell upon the Baptist, and upon the men whom he called from their fishing-nets to follow him ; and it sent people home wondering at the power with which he spoke, and at the unfamiliar strain of thought which seemed to prove that there was once more a prophet in Israel. It is not abstract truth breathed from frigid lips that moves the world ; it is only he who lives as well as sees the truth who can call dead souls from their graves, and draw men after him to martyrdom.

Now, if we are Christian in anything but name, all this must have some application to ourselves ; for Christ recognized as his own only those who did the will of the heavenly Father. We all have a work to do, and each has his appropriate place in the great scheme of things. But all have not the same work, and it is not in the outward circumstances of his life that we are called upon to follow Jesus. The legitimate and useful pursuits of men are of the most diverse character, and it is only through the harmonious combination of innumerable functions that the work of a civilized society can be carried on. Our accepted work, however, may be done under two widely different kinds of impulse. We may attend to it for purely selfish ends, to gain wealth, whether it be much or little, for ourselves, and having no regard for our neighbours, so long as we keep within the limits of our country's laws ; and spending our lives thus we may be, to all appearance, successful and respected. And yet what a poor unworthy kind of life it is, far removed from all that is noble and divine in man ; and when it is over, and the earthly treasure can be held no more, what a mean starved little soul must pass shivering to the unseen world. I am unwilling to believe that many thus degrade themselves into mere money-making machines, and for such a sordid end sacrifice

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the infinite treasures of the mind. It is, I believe, far more common for men to act from a sense of duty, scorning everything base and ungenerous, and, though their outlook may be narrow, still providing for others as well as for themselves, helping rather than crushing their weaker neighbours, and trying to give a healthy tone to the business of the world. This sense of duty is the salt that preserves society from utter corruption, and I rejoice to think that it is present in every class of our English community. But the sense of duty, though in its ultimate seat it involves the recognition of God and the adoration of his holy will, may exist, and have its authority acknowledged, while the spiritual faculty is dull, and unable to perceive its more gracious and tender features. It is here that Christianity steps in, and sheds a Divine glory over the tedium of duty. All work dutifully and unselfishly done is Divine, the work of him that sent us to play our part as his children in a society of brethren. It matters not what may be our place in the scale of worldly rank, or how lowly may be our occupation in the eyes of worldly men; the work is dignified by the spirit in which it is performed. As George Herbert says :

‘ Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,  
Makes that and th’ action fine.’ .

It is our want of faith that prevents us from seeing these things with noonday clearness. If we had faith as a little seed, which, though buried in the ground, aspires toward heaven, as though confident of its Divine destiny, and grows into the majesty of a stately tree, we should hear the breathings of a Divine call within, and feel the pressure of duty as a high privilege conferred upon us by the Father of spirits. The judgments of earth will often be reversed in the judgment of heaven. The humblest labourer who offers his work as a holy sacrifice to God, doing it with a thankful and kindly heart as well as it can be done, is nearer the kingdom of God than the proudest statesman or general who is serving only his own ambition. The name

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of the latter may be acclaimed throughout the world ; the name of the former is written in the book of life.

Further, the man who does the will of him that sent him is a light in the world, and bears a holy lamp which he must keep pure from all defilement. Christ said to his disciples, 'Ye are the light of the world.' It may not be our special office to lead or to instruct ; and we may be altogether without the consciousness of having been sent in order to spread the light of higher truth among mankind. But goodness, apart from all purpose, shines by its own light ; and it is well to remember that a spark of eternal light has been committed to us, and we must not hide it in shades of sin, or place it under a thick cover of laziness or selfishness. If we only keep it pure, it will shed its own beams, illumining the face of care, or dissipating some cloud of sorrow, or making one bright and happy home, which, with sweet and gentle influence, will gradually diffuse a heavenly benediction around. And times may not be wanting when the lips, the organs of a pure mind, may drop some wise counsel or tender admonition, which may save a brother in his hour of temptation and need. Let us live as children of the light and of the day. The shadows of evening must fall, and happy he who has fewest dark spots in the records of memory, and can humbly think that, in spite of many failings, he has tried to be faithful to the light which was given to him. Then he may look forward calmly to the night when no man can work, believing that he will pass from the darkness of earth into the eternal light of God.

The perception of this light has, I believe, always been, and will always remain the effective evidence of Christianity. Without in the least wishing to depreciate the labours of thought and scholarship in seeking to give an intellectual interpretation to Christianity, and to place its doctrines within the circle of well established knowledge, I think that the fundamental fact in our Christian faith is the inward experience that, whereas we were blind, now we see. This view, which, as I suppose, correctly describes the real

process of belief, though it has not always been clearly recognized, has become more and more important in our own time, because, with our advancing knowledge, the old fabric of evidences, which once seemed to be built on an impregnable rock, now appears unsubstantial and artificial, and is found to rest on very insecure supports, and many dogmas which were once regarded as the most unquestionable truths are doubted or denied by numbers of educated and impartial men. Such vast changes of religious thought necessarily bring with them much mental disquiet, and even, in many minds, a temporary eclipse of faith; but ultimately the gain is immeasurable; for in being driven from the changing and uncertain forms of intellectual apprehension we are compelled to enter more deeply into the inner heart of Christianity, and to seek out those eternal principles which we can best describe as the Spirit of Christ, and which remain while creed and ritual assume various forms, and yield to the inevitable laws of mental change.

This truth is brought before us in the story of the man who had been blind from birth. He could not argue with learned Pharisees, who, being well versed in the evidences of Judaism and the Divine Authority of the Law, did not *think*, but '*knew*' that Jesus was a sinner, because he did not keep the sabbath. He himself '*knew*' only one thing, that for the first time in his life he was able to see; and before this undeniable fact Jewish evidences and pharisaic certainty crumbled away, and the sabbath-breaker came to be recognized as the Son of God. Whatever view we may take of this most life-like story, whether we regard it as literal fact or as a symbolical account of Christ's power of spiritual illumination, we are at all events justified in applying it metaphorically, for the Evangelist himself has plainly set us the example through his record of the words of Christ. Before the miracle is wrought Christ declares himself to be the light of the world, obviously in a spiritual sense; and afterwards he says that for judgment he came into the world that they who see not might see, and they

who see might become blind, again clearly with a figurative meaning. That a poor man in Jerusalem gained the use of his eyes is a fact of small importance in the history of the world; but that Christ so shone in the hearts of men that they who had been blind in the darkness of sin saw the glory of God, and that they who were conceited of their light, and condemned all who did not share their opinions, were dazzled into blindness, and became mere obstructives in the religious progress of mankind, is a fact of vast significance, which is brought before us with wonderful power in this narrative.

This use of material analogies in order to illustrate spiritual truth is quite in accordance with Christ's general practice. He uses the boldest figures, and sometimes the most homely comparisons, in order to make clear his religious lesson; and we, with our prosy western thought, often fail to understand, because we do not enter into the warm poetic imaginativeness of the East. We like everything to be hard and sharp, and our facts to be precise in every detail, so that we turn into stony dogma what he and his Evangelists offered as bread of life for the pining heart. Figures derived from light and seeing are, however, so obvious that they may be regarded as the common property of mankind, and are indeed in such constant use that we hardly notice their figurative character. Thus we say 'we see,' meaning that we understand what has been said. We talk of intellectual *discernment*, of a *clear* argument, of a *transparent* sophism, of a *lucid* explanation. And so we may carry the analogy up, as Christ does, into the spiritual realm, and say that there is an eye of the soul, which is the organ for the perception of spiritual realities. This is the eye which Christ opens; not telling us, as though we were dwellers in a dark cavern, of the brilliant objects outside, which we cannot behold, but removing our own blindness, and calling on us, as dwellers in the light of day, to look and see for ourselves. And what a wonderful moment it is when the spiritual eye opens for the first time, and we gaze with adoration into the eternal realm of beauty

and righteousness, and see God everywhere as the supreme Reality, whose love has been beside us all through our wilful years. We have been as children wandering in a dark forest, and fancying they were alone, when lo! they come out into a bright space, and see that a guide is beside them, who without their knowledge has tenderly directed their steps, and they gaze up into his face, and recognize their father's smile.

The evil which springs from the want of spiritual insight receives impressive illustration from the narrative of the blind man. The Pharisees were unable to see that an act of beneficent power must have come from a good source. To us it seems almost an axiom that he who habitually does good deeds must be a good man. But the Pharisees were blinded by a theory which they identified with religion, and therefore were confident that he who ran counter to their theory was an irreligious sinner, however plausible his actions might be, and indeed that he was all the more dangerous because his life had the appearance of goodness. They used the argument by which intolerance, with all its hideous train of persecution, torture, and murder, has invariably sought to justify itself. It is assumed that the principal office of religion is to maintain certain opinions, and that the expression of any doubt about these opinions is monstrous impiety. The blind inquisitor has not perceived that religion consists in the spirit which animates the life, that reason has its inalienable rights, and that to attempt to propagate even the truest religion by violence and bloodshed is diabolical, and not Christian. And so he has gone to his awful work with a crust of arrogant superstition blinding his eyes, and flattering himself that he is doing God service by barbarities at which humanity shudders. His only excuse is that he is blind; but in boasting that he sees he removes this cloak from his sin. This deadly mistake, which in past centuries has inflicted untold sufferings on the world, is not extinct. The persecutor has lost his power; but the evil spirit is not exorcised, and to this day a large part of Christendom follows the



Pharisees rather than Christ. Let us search our hearts lest this evil be in ourselves ; for this tendency to condemn men for unreal offences is the dark side of religion, which is apt to follow us like a malignant phantom. Christ, with his large and pure insight, gives us the true principle in a sentence,—‘ If ye had known what this means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.’ This sort of knowledge comes not from reasoning or opinion, but from the perception of the tender and loving soul.

To exhibit fully the possession of spiritual insight would involve a study of Christ’s teaching in detail ; but for the purpose of illustration and suggestion we may select a few of his great and pregnant sayings.

When he had to defend his disciples against a charge of breaking the sabbath, he laid down the comprehensive principle, ‘ The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath ; so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath.’ In these words he unveils the purpose and significance of all religious institutions. They are not ordained as expressive of the eternal nature of God, so that it is meritorious to observe and impious to neglect them, but are adapted to human wants, and are valid only so long and so far as they satisfy these wants. The rites which appeal to one race or to one period may be unsuited to another ; and the moment ritual exalts itself above morality it becomes a hollow and enervating superstition. The spiritual man is lord over all such things, and, with emancipated reason, uses them as he judges best for spiritual ends. The same lesson is implied in the words, ‘ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.’ The redeemed sons of God are not to crouch like slaves under commands which make no appeal to their reason and conscience, but are to look far and wide beyond the narrow enclosures of superstition, and do such things as they see their Father doing. Such was the teaching of Christ, enunciating a principle which the dark world has never yet comprehended ; and if any man were to use the same argument to-day, he would be mis-

understood as Jesus was misunderstood, and probably charged with blasphemy as Jesus was charged, so thick is the veil that lies upon the heart of Christendom.

Another saying was addressed to the multitude, but was so contrary to prevalent opinion that even the disciples had to ask for an explanation:—‘There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things that proceed out of the man are those that defile the man.’ By these words he cut away the whole system of merely outward and material distinctions in religion, and threw men back upon the only Divine distinction, that of inward character. It is evil thoughts and deeds issuing from the heart, and these alone that can defile. I venture to think that, though it has not been expressed, a corresponding truth is involved in this principle: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can sanctify him. The most solemn ceremony, if there is no offering up of the soul, is a vapid form, and the foul mind is not made clean by that which properly belongs only to the body. This of course does not deny the value of mental association with material objects. Indeed nature, which is the vesture of God, ought daily to bring holy messages to our hearts; but it depends on the purity and receptiveness of the heart itself whether this shall be so, and the mere charm or incantation of a priest cannot turn a material symbol into a spiritual force. The belief that salvation depends on the correct performance of a ceremony is on even a lower spiritual level than the Jewish distinction of clean and unclean, and vanishes the moment our eyes are opened to perceive the real spiritual relations between God and man.

As another illustration we may connect together two sayings which indicate Christ’s clear vision of the ultimate source of religious knowledge:—‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’; ‘Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them unto babes.’ The religious knowledge which is precious for the guidance of life does not consist in the acceptance

of metaphysical propositions which have been forged by the speculative intellect or dragged from sacred scripture by a torturing exegesis, but in the spirit's perception of the eternal Spirit, its vision of those great principles of righteousness which dwell for ever in the bosom of God. These we cannot learn from creeds and catechisms, but only from the reverent gaze of the soul itself; and unless the heart reflect them like a pure mirror, we cannot behold them. This purity, this simplicity of heart, which has no concealed and tortuous aims, is a mark of childhood; and therefore the man of clean and humble heart is compared to a babe. Can we not all remember examples which establish the truth of Christ's insight? Have we not seen the worn features of the illiterate toiler lighted up with the beauty of spiritual communion, radiant with the liberty of the glory of the children of God, while men of vast learning and high position have been groping blindly among the survivals of a savage superstition? Not that learning need quench the light of God; but if we depend upon this, so as to identify religious knowledge with intellectual speculation, and allow the heart to become clouded and the spiritual eye dim, we may gain a reputation for orthodoxy, and know much of what other men have thought about God, but we shall not know him for ourselves as our own Father and the indwelling Spirit of our lives, and, amid our vain conceit of knowledge, the things that belong to our peace will be hidden from our sight.

Lastly, we may refer to the penetration with which Jesus pierced to the permanent essence of the law and the prophets, and summed up the ancient teaching in the two great commandments, to love God with all the heart and mind and strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. This declaration, so vast in its grandeur and compass, sweeps away the heavy burden of ritual and dogma, Jewish or Christian, under which the world has groaned, and places in our hands a key of interpretation, whereby we may test the value of sacred books, and try the spirits whether they be of God. That which tends to

quicken our love, and draw us into nearer communion with him who is Love, and to send us forth on errands of beneficence among our fellow-men, is of God, and bears the stamp of his inspiration ;. but whatever tends to nourish our pride, to separate us, as superior beings, from the common herd of our brother-men, to smother the spirit of love, which is the spirit of God, is from beneath, and not from heaven.

Such are a few examples of the insight displayed in the teaching of Christ. He spoke of things which he had seen and known, and drew his sublimest truths from the deep wells of his own experience. It was this insight, this direct gaze into the light of God, which enabled him to open blind eyes, and send a thrill of exalted life through souls that were ready for his message. This life is the light of men, and, when it takes possession of our hearts, and dwells within as an abiding power, we ask no other evidence ; we have the witness in ourselves, and walk in light, even as he is in the light.

Hail, Light eternal, that from God's high throne  
Diffusest o'er the world thy heav'nly beams,  
Through lands and ages claiming still thine own,  
And kindling in their hearts prophetic gleams. .

But not alone for prophets' souls thy ray  
Gilds the bright vision of some island blest ;  
For every man thou beaonest the way  
That leads through clouds and storm to calmest rest.

For hidden deep within our mortal frame  
Our God has built himself a sacred shrine ;  
And on its altar burns a holy flame,  
Which with its light illumines the path Divine.

But sinful passion blinds the spirit's eyes,  
And superstition spreads her darkening veil ;  
Vain thoughts deceive the prudent and the wise,  
Who o'er a chartless ocean hoist their sail.

And so men wrangle over forms and creeds,  
While each lays claim to God's peculiar grace.  
They vaunt their piety with cruel deeds,  
And God's fair image in the soul deface.

But through the strife of tongues a still small voice,  
Breathing a sweet soft music in the soul,  
Bids, in all lands, true worshippers rejoice,  
And peaceful own the Spirit's mild control.

And when from out the depths there comes a cry,  
And trust, though anguished, sings her quiet lays,  
Or penitential sorrow breathes her sigh,  
Or new-born joy evokes the song of praise,

Oh ! then we pass behind dividing thought,  
And know that in our nature's hidden deep  
The soul some beams of heav'nly light has caught,  
And is not dead, though it may often sleep.

And now, far-seeing in these latter times,  
We know, eternal Light, thy guiding ray,  
Through weary ages and o'er dusky climes,  
Has been the harbinger of perfect day.

Ee'n in the savage soul some spark Divine  
Has turned its aspirations towards the light ;  
And when a prophet bade it rise and shine,  
And spoke God's word with all the Spirit's might,

There were who heard, a small and chosen band,  
Whose kindled hearts the way of life now sought ;  
And, full of faith, they passed from land to land  
The living flame from God's own altar brought.

These were the darkened world's redeeming light,  
Whose radiance o'er the nations streamed afar,  
Showing a golden track through saddest night,  
And to the wave-tossed soul its polar star.

LIFE MANIFESTED IN, AND COMMUNICATED BY,  
CHRIST.

THERE is no break between the ninth and tenth chapters. The phrase 'Verily, verily,' intimates the solemn continuation of the same theme. The ninth chapter ends with the implication that the Pharisees, who claimed to be the special guardians of divine knowledge, were in reality spiritually blind. This condemnation of them is much more emphatically expressed in Matthew, where they are denounced as blind leaders of the blind.<sup>1</sup> The figure now changes, and, it must be confessed, is presented with some degree of confusion, though the general meaning is sufficiently clear. Following the example of Ezekiel,<sup>2</sup> Jesus denounces the would-be shepherds of Israel, as, at a far later time, our own poet denounced the shepherds of England, who

'for their bellies' sake  
Creep, and intrude, and clumb into the fold!  
Blind mouths.'

To the deadening letter of legal teaching he boldly opposes himself and his principles. He came to reform and to liberate. The good shepherd was one who was ready to die for the sheep; and such was he. He sought nothing for himself, but only to lead the sheep forth into a spacious pasture, where no ravening wolf could come to seize them, and no unwholesome food or cramping chains could limit the free energy of their lives. He came that men might have Life, and might have it abundantly. Those who were his own would hear his voice, and as the life which he brought was not Jewish or Roman or Greek, but divinely human, his voice would reverberate throughout the world, and gather together the scattered children of God<sup>3</sup> into a Divine fellowship, so that there would be 'one fold, one

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xv. 14, xxiii. 16, 17, 19, 24, 26. Cf. Luke vi. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> John xi. 52.

shepherd.' It is a magnificent vision, the realization of which is still kept by blind guides in the region of prophecy and faith.

The idea of Life, dwelling in and communicated through Christ, is fundamental in this Gospel ; and the same thought stands at the beginning of the author's first epistle,—' The Life was manifested, . . . the eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us.' The course of the narrative has caused us to touch on this thought before ; but we may now view it more in detail.

By life is meant the inward principle of our conscious being, the secret force which, by its quick response to all kinds of outward appeal, brings us into felt relations with the universe, and acts in its turn on the scene around us. The deeper and larger the life is, the more extended and subtle do these relations become, and the more penetrating its action upon the world. The lowest animals have living relations only with what concerns the interests of their physical being ; the savage has dim gropings after something beyond the animal sphere, but from what a universe is the sleeping soul within him shut out by its night of ignorance ; the growing and civilized man stretches out feelers towards things seen and unseen, and new messages from the great mystery around him come pouring in upon heart and brain, till he is lost in wonder at the vastness and beauty of the world and of life.

It is true, however, that Christianity addresses itself mainly to what we call the moral and spiritual life. The reason is clear. It is not only that this is the most distinctively human, but it is that part of our mental being where, even while we are said to live, disease and death are most apt to be found. We are here within the region of choice, where we can close our eyes against the light, and stretch forth greedy fingers in search of pleasure instead of extending the full and bounteous hand of love, and can lie in stupid insensibility to that communion with God which in its completeness is the goal of man's perfection, or, having once felt the living throb, may lay upon

the tender strings that vibrate with a heavenly music the dull weight of earthly ambitions and cares. It is here that the life of Christianity would enter, waking our sensibility to all moral beauty, quickening every energy which responds to spiritual appeal, and thus bringing us into vital relations with a world that lies beyond the reach of touch and sight, with the Infinite and Eternal, with God. But though it is in this higher domain of the soul that the Life is most manifest, we must not suppose that it does not concern itself with the lower. We are only one organism, and we cannot exercise our other faculties worthily unless they are filled with energy from that which is rightfully supreme. It is the spiritual side of our being that issues laws for all the rest. Just intellectual judgment, as we have seen, vanishes where any of the selfish passions have sway, and is possible only to that simplicity which has no end but truth. Purity of taste withers under the touch of moral depravity, but opens its blossoms to the plastic influence of a holy will. Thus Christianity quickens our being all round, and by establishing a living connexion between the soul and God places us in relations of harmony with the world which he has made.

But Christianity carries our thought yet higher. What is this Life, which seems, as it were, to dwell within our life, so blended with our personality that we are directly conscious of it, and yet appearing to envelope us, to speak to us with an authority other than our own, and to reach away into unknown depths, wooing us still to experiences ever new? It is nothing less than the 'eternal life,' the life of God, so far as our finite being can receive it. All life, indeed, is Divine; but in lower creatures it is, as it were, an evanescent flash from the eternal force into temporal conditions, in man it takes up its abode, and brings him into conscious relations with the Father from whom it comes. In one Son of Man above all others it has been manifested, and in him it assumes the forms of grace and truth, of love and light. Such, then, so far as we may venture to penetrate the unsearchable nature of



the infinite Being, is the life of God. We know that we see in a mirror, darkly, and not yet face to face ; but the glory which we behold is real, though undefined, and it cannot be destroyed, but only transfigured, by a clearer vision. Through Christ we know God as Light and Love, words of inexhaustible import, realities which shine into our hearts from the life and death of the Crucified. When we apprehend, we already begin to appropriate it. The Life was manifested that we might share it, and that our fellowship might be with the Father and with his Son. By receiving it we too become sons, and enter into a blessed fellowship with one another ; and so the life of Light and Love is the invisible bond which shall at last join mankind into the unity of brotherhood, and link them to Him of whose eternal being it is the highest expression that we know.

Before the splendour of this vision sad thoughts may steal over us, raising the question, how are we to receive this life ? It is a beautiful, a fascinating dream ; but here stand we, with all our imperfection and sin about us, trying perhaps in some bungling and inconstant way to do our duty, but oh ! how far from the ideal of the sons of God !

Does not this very question already begin its own answer ? For whence the dissatisfaction with ourselves ? Whence the ideal that comes, and comes again, and will not allow us to slumber in darkness ? Whence, amidst our self-abasement the feeling of an ineffable Love brooding over our hearts, and asking only to be allowed to heal ? These things are not of our creation. They are the stirrings of a Life which is already in the world, the conscious beat of a force which has lodged in innumerable souls besides our own.

Hence we come to discern in Christianity a power of God unto salvation. Those whose natures have little passion, and who have been brought up in the sweet atmosphere of a pious and cultured home, are apt to underestimate the violence of perverse desire, and do not understand the

cry, Lord, save us, or we perish. For them it is enough if Christ presents a beautiful picture of an amiable and ordered life, and lays before them precepts of attractive purity and kindness. All who choose may follow and obey, shaping their own life by the strength of their own will. But most of us poor mortals are not cast in this smooth and rounded mould, and, if Christianity could do no more for us, there would not be much Gospel in it. We want a strong hand to grasp us when we are sinking in the sea of doubt and passion. We want a love to come piercing through our selfishness, and dissolving it away; a holiness, as a cleansing fire, to burn up our sordid wishes; a faith which will make God an ever present reality to heart and will; a devotion which will change our idle fears and ambitions into the steadfast simplicity of Christ. Now, Christianity is not a mere picture of idyllic sweetness for the blameless and quiet soul; it is a force which can take possession of the corrupt and sinful and degraded, and create life amidst their death. Spiritual, like physical, force is indestructible, and, unlike physical force, its energy does not diminish with the distance, but is capable of infinite expansion, and after an interval of centuries, when spread over the millions who acknowledge it, can shatter our self-deception, and bring us, trembling and astonished, into the glory of God. The Life was manifested, and it is still here. The foolish men who killed the body forgot that they could not kill the soul, and, instead of degrading their victim by hanging him on a cross, they only dignified the cross into a symbol of divinest love. Whatever we may think of this Life, it is among us, a potent and unquestionable fact, crowding the minds of men with ideas which otherwise would not be there, lifting their hearts in aspiration, bracing their wills to strenuous effort, and sending them on messages of love not of their own thought or choosing. If it be not only among us, but known and acknowledged within us, it will bear its own witness that it is the divinest thing in our consciousness, and will evoke the daily prayer for a deeper baptism in this living stream,

for a more complete surrender to Him whose indwelling Life it is.

The Life which has thus flowed through Christ as a new spiritual force upon the world may work in us either with or without our knowledge, but we cannot grow up in the midst of a Christian community without, at least some unconfessed germ of higher goodness in our minds. Mankind is not an accidental aggregate of individuals, who have none but voluntary relations with one another, but rather a vast organism, capable indeed of large disturbance from the selfishness of individual wills or the folly and stupidity of individual minds, but nevertheless animated by a common nature, having countless relations from which it is impossible for us to escape, possessing a principle of growth, and tending towards some vaguely recognized ideal. In all Christian communities, unchristian as they still are in many of their ways, men are somewhat different from what they would be if Christianity had never existed. Even the slums of barbarism in our great cities cannot entirely shut out its Light and Love. A man who has grown up in the ignorance and vice which Christian philanthropy has not yet exterminated may look with the dim wonder and hatred of a savage on the mighty civilization all around him; but he cannot be as if it were not, and even in his dull heart the unknown voice of Christ has wakened some faint and misunderstood echoes. Much more must the spiritual force of Christianity work in the minds of those who have lived in any distinct connexion with Christian usages. Whether they are aware of it or not, it is a power, either of inspiration or remonstrance, in all their thoughts and feelings; and for this ennobling influence, which has silently incorporated itself with our whole character, we owe to Christianity a quite immeasurable debt.

But for its full effect upon the individual life faith in it is essential. By faith in it I do not mean the intellectual assent to a number of propositions,—an assent which may be wholly unspiritual and inoperative,—but a heartfelt realization of the beauty and power of the Spirit of Life in

Christ. We cannot have gazed even for a moment with conscious faith and love upon that Spirit, and ever again be the same as we were before. Through that gaze it passes into our life, and, whether we are faithful or unfaithful, is the light of all our days. It is the power of God unto salvation, a hidden leaven of righteousness, an earnest of the glory to be revealed in us when heart and mind and will are consecrated to God, and present an untroubled image of his Grace and Truth. *Why* this faith comes to some and not to others who can say? 'It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth,' and to claim any personal merit for it would be to lose it. But though we cannot read the mysteries of the Divine choice, we can tell, speaking generally, *how* the life comes. It is under the influence, direct or indirect, of some soul that already has it. Spiritual force is transmitted by living agents; and if for a moment we can lift our eyes above that confused blending of the earthly and the heavenly which makes the tangled web of ecclesiastical history, and disengage into distinct view the genuine expression of its original principle, we shall see that the spiritual Christendom consists of lines of transfigured souls, which have caught one from another the living energy once manifested in Christ.

If faith is thus wrought in us by the influence of some higher soul, it is nourished and maintained by Christian fellowship. The Church, so far as it approaches its true intention, is a society whose acknowledged principle of life is the Spirit of Christ. It consists indeed of men who are not exempt from error and sin, and necessarily includes many whose connexion with it is purely nominal; but unless it has sunk into mere hypocrisy, it bears witness to a heavenly life, and hands down through an unbroken succession of devoted men and women the strength and loveliness of its pristine faith. Our intelligence is too limited to present the truth without partiality or perversion; nevertheless, a man morally sound reveals a truth higher than the forms of his thought. The confession of sin breaks from the purest lips; yet that very confession

declares the holiness of the treasured ideal. Hence it is true that the Church has what has been termed a sacred deposit, a Life and Truth confided to it which are larger and fairer than those of any individual, and tend to ennoble and sanctify all who come within the range of their influence. If this be so, we suffer spiritual loss when we cut ourselves off from the communion of Christendom, and are in danger of forfeiting that aroma of heavenly simplicity and sweetness which, through all faults of intellect and will, characterize the genuine Christian. It is true that there is a lonely communion with God which dispenses with all mediating helps, and feels the presence of another to be only an intrusion ; but, so far as I know, it is principally among Christians that this communion has been found, and to most of us the Father is revealed through that Life of Grace and Truth which was manifested in Christ, and which still lives and bears witness in his Church.

O Life, mysterious essence that enfolds  
 And interpenetrates this wondrous scene,  
 Far darting through illimitable space,  
 And joining part to part with viewless force  
 Of interacting sympathy and beams  
 Of quivering light. Thou ever present Power,  
 Whose ardent thrill trembles in every star,  
 Whose thought, enthroned above the listening worlds,  
 Guides their stupendous movements by thy laws  
 Harmonious and beneficent, we bow  
 In lowly reverence, and with awe profound,  
 Before thy might and wisdom. Far beyond  
 Our feeble comprehension thou dost reign  
 The high and lofty One, majestic Source  
 Of all we see and know. But turn we then  
 To objects near and common, flowers that bloom  
 And die, or insects fluttering on their wings  
 And yielding up their momentary breath ;  
 'Tis mystery still ; and small and great alike  
 Reveal and veil the Power infinite.

Yet man is in communion with that Power,  
 And he, whene'er he casts away his pride  
 And searches deep within, o'erhears the tones  
 Of a pure Will, which calls upon his will  
 For service due. He then perceives that life  
 Is not his own, but glows within his breast  
 A conscious spark of universal fire.  
 There the stern law of duty is inscribed,  
 And forms ideal sweetly woo the soul,  
 Which seeks a home in its eternal Source.  
 Such is the child of God ; but sin intrudes,  
 And clouds the spark ethereal with the dross  
 Of ill self-chosen, and the holy light  
 Fades in the temple where God's Spirit dwelt.  
 But lo ! the great Restorer came, to build  
 The ruined fane, and on its altar light  
 Once more the fire Divine. In him was Life,  
 The Life of grace and truth ; and from the throne  
 Of God's high majesty stepped forth, to dwell  
 In mortal frame, peace, holiness, and love.  
 These we can know, but still we know in part.  
 To deeps unsearchable we strain our sight ;  
 And, as a mountain mist, with filmy veil  
 Wraps in mysterious folds the towering peak,  
 And through some rift displays the pastures green,  
 Or sleeping lake, or precipice dim, that hides  
 In heaving darkness its proud form, so we  
 In all this boundless universe behold  
 With searching insight mystery, and still  
 A baffling mystery, receding far  
 Into transcendent light. But yet, O Life,  
 Mysterious as thou art, we feel thy power,  
 We see thy beauty ; and thy wondrous love  
 Glows in our hearts, and will for ever shine  
 A guiding ray, till, mortal errors past,  
 In kneeling adoration we bow down,  
 And with cleansed sight behold thee face to face.

## LAZARUS.

QUITE apart from the question of miracles, the story of the raising of Lazarus is beset with critical difficulties, and I must frankly confess that there is no account of it which is, to my own mind, quite satisfactory, though I still think that the difficulties are increased rather than diminished by ascribing to it a post-apostolic origin, at a time when the synoptic tradition had already obtained a sacred authority. Origen, while apparently<sup>1</sup> accepting the narrative as the record of an actual occurrence, nevertheless gives it an allegorical interpretation. He says that even now there are Lazaruses who, after friendship with Jesus, have sickened and died, and remained in the tomb and place of the dead, dead with the dead, and after this have been quickened by the prayer of Jesus, and come forth encompassed with the bonds of former sins, and with their eyes still covered, but afterwards released from their sin and ignorance by command of Christ; and men are moved to believe the preaching of Jesus when they see those who had been sunk in vice shaking off, at the command of the Logos, not only the evil odour of sin, but also the bonds that oppressed their practical and contemplative life.<sup>2</sup> One lesson we may learn from this. When a friend has gone astray, and his soul is sick unto death, let us not wrap ourselves in the pride we call virtue, and cast him off. Rather let us then especially exercise our love, and shrink not from the evil and corruption, but go to waken him out of sleep by our sympathy, or, armed with pure unselfish prayer, startle him, with our loud cry and our tears, from the tomb of sin. We cannot resuscitate the decayed body; but miracles of sympathy, and the quickening thrill of love, are not yet past. And it is to the purest and most loving that the stricken soul turns in longing for a lost communion. One suffering under the

<sup>1</sup> I say 'apparently' because the earlier part of the exposition is lost.

<sup>2</sup> *Com. in Joan*, Tom. xxviii. 5 sqq.

sense of sin cannot go to the self-righteous world, with its malicious pride and scorn, but seeks the Holiest, believing that he will take him by the hand, and bring him to the Father, who can quicken the dead, and call things that are not as though they were. And it is to the holiest that loving friends fly for refuge: 'If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died'; thou wouldest have held him up when our weak remonstrance failed; but even now thy prayers can restore him. And so the holy and loving One is the resurrection and the life, and whoever abides in that holiness and love shall never die. It is the eternal life, and is given to that reverent clinging faith which treasures the bright image in the heart. This too is our comfort in the partings of this our mortal state. For us no miracle will restore the beloved form; but we can await in patience our Father's time, and see with the eye of faith a throng of blessed souls in the unknown land, ready to welcome us when we have passed through the cleansing fires that we call death, and this mortal has put on immortality.

Ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν.

(Our friend is dead.)

I'll strew sweet flowers on thy grave,  
Not deeming that thy spirit resteth there,  
But my own heart to save  
From dark despair.

No precious gift can love now bring  
To lay with happy smiles before thy feet,  
Nor on high-soaring wing  
Thy spirit greet.

But thee, unseen, I ne'er forget;  
To thee, beloved, still my heart doth cling;  
And though my sun is set,  
In dreams I sing,



## The Sympathy of Christ

And think I wander in the light  
Of joyous day, when on me beamed thy smile,  
And thou didst with delight  
My way beguile ;

And we did ramble, hand in hand,  
Through meadows laughing to the sunny skies,  
And viewed the jocund land  
With gladsome eyes.

Those days are fled ; but love abides,  
And I would honour still the fragile shell,  
Which earth now sadly hides  
Where thou didst dwell.

And so I'll bring a garland sweet  
And strew fresh roses on thy silent tomb,  
And lay at thy cold feet  
Some vernal bloom.

And now will hope my way beguile,  
That we again in other worlds shall meet,  
And thou with angel smile  
My spirit greet.

We are told that 'Jesus wept.' His tears must have been tears of sympathy. It was this sympathy that drew to him the hearts of the sorrowing and the sinful, and gave him such power to renew and guide the lives of others. In him the practical and the emotional elements of religion are found in harmonious combination. He has all the active force and determination which the man of energy demands ; and he utters also profound truths, and sheds a light into the darkest chambers of the spirit, which will satisfy the most meditative mystic. He stands forth with all the determination of a reformer, to protest against the hollowness of the religious rulers, and proclaim the absolute necessity of moral righteousness. But he also retreats into

quiet depths within, and speaks in gentle tones of faith in God, of an intimate communion with the Father, of a heart truly sanctified, of a love pure and childlike, as the root of moral righteousness. He understands the most delicate religious emotions, and responds to the very thoughts of those whom he addresses, now soothing by assurances of mercy the unconfessed regret of the sinful, and again rebuking the politely concealed scorn of the formalist. It is this penetrating sympathy that constitutes his peculiar power. Others have gone about doing good, and declaring the need of righteousness; but who has risen, through the majesty of love, into such close communion with God? Who has so felt for the lowliest of earth's children? Unbounded, self-renouncing love was the ground of his knowledge of God; for love is the one solvent of all mysteries, and he only who sympathizes with God can know God. Through love too he knew what was in man, and penetrated into the deepest anguish, hope, and joy of the human soul. Hence it is that he gathers to himself all the weary and heavy-laden, and our mistrust melts away, our remorse is calmed, our sorrow is consoled by the power of his words. His sympathy wins, his love constrains us.

But we must not pause here, nor fretfully wish that we had met the gaze of those earnest eyes, and heard the subduing pathos of that voice. A sympathy as tender, a love as faithful, is very close to us, around us and within us, encompassing us with blessings, and speaking in tones, which the childlike spirit knows, of trust and peace. Jesus Christ claimed no independent greatness. The light that shone within him was a ray from the everlasting splendour. His power, his wisdom, his goodness, were an emanation of the glory of God. 'I can of mine own self do nothing.' 'The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.' 'The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.' 'He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.' This humble and profound conviction that his knowledge and goodness belonged not

to himself, but were a shining through him of the unquenchable light, constituted the peculiar greatness of Christ, and made him the revealer of God. No thought of self, no ambitious desires, debased the purity of his soul. 'It is not mine, but God's,' was his constant feeling. 'Rest not your admiration with me, but raise it to Him from whom my glory comes,' was the tenor of his teaching. And as 'he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,' this complete self-renunciation of Christ has exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, for the spirit was given without measure to him who never resisted that Spirit. This is the meaning of the Sonship of Christ, that the reign of self was so destroyed that all within him was Divine, an emanation from the fulness of God, a beam from the eternal Light. We have beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.

When, then, we are melted by the tenderness of Christ, and long to find a refuge in that sympathy, so pure in feeling, so prompt in act, let us not think of that love as far distant, but remember that it is eternal as the throne of God, looking upon us from the heavens above and from the earth beneath, speaking to us in the heart's emotions, inviting us in daily mercies, and, if we will receive it, pleading with us in the sharpest pains of sorrow. The love that strengthened Christ in his midnight agony breathes in our spirits now. It tells us of a joy surviving the wrecks of time. It tells us of a peace which worldly storms cannot ruffle; of a saints' rest which unhallowed passion and delusive temptation cannot break. Let us never resist that overflowing grace, but clasp it to our hearts, and confess with humble praise that all we have of worth or nobleness is the gift of God, and apart from him we are but perishable dust. Yes, O our Father, take us to thyself, and fashion us according to thy will. Pour into us a share of thine own immeasurable love, that we, like true children of thine, may be tender in emotion and holy in deed, and that men seeing our good works may look through and beyond us into thine eternal goodness, and glorify thee, the one inexhaustible fountain whence life and gladness flow.

*Οἱ παραμυθούμενοι τὴν Μαριάμ.*

(Those comforting Mary.)

How oft thy sympathy and love, dear friend,  
Have soothed sad hearts, and braced the trembling will,  
'Mid suffering's tedious night, to cherish still  
Faith in the dawning day that ne'er shall end.  
How oft 'twas thine o'er weary toil to send,  
From thy full, bounteous soul, a gentle rill  
Of peace, despairing eyes with joy to fill,  
And on dark clouds the bow of hope to bend.  
And now, from many souls, may grateful love,  
And soothing sympathy, and faith's high cheer,  
Come in thy trial to sustain thy heart.  
Beloved friend, with thee we look above ;  
Thy saintly brow tells us that heav'n is near,  
And, though the veil may fall, we ne'er can part.

### THE BOX OF SPIKENARD.

THERE is something peculiarly affecting in actions which spring from the simple promptings of the heart, and have no ulterior object. Mary has become the type of pure love and reverent sympathy. In a utilitarian age we are apt to agree, at least partly, with Judas, and think that all our deeds ought to aim at some practical result. Or if the concern for the poor, expressed by Judas, was hypocritical, Martha's practical kindness was genuine, and we often prefer the efficiency of Martha's busy hands to the quietude of Mary's listening soul. But Jesus himself preferred the communion of heart with heart, and was most deeply touched by the unexpected action which had no efficacy beyond its expression of feelings that lay too deep for words. And this very absence of intention has imparted to Mary's deed a moral power which the

giving of many thousand pence to the poor would never have acquired. How little we know of Mary, and yet how much is involved in that little,—the pure simplicity of love, the silent seeking for the deep things of the Spirit, the untainted expression of the heart's devotion. From her we learn that, even towards men, the intuitive appreciation begotten of love is more precious than any material gift; and towards God, whom it is impossible for us to benefit, nothing is of value but the reverent spirit's searching of the depths, and the unaffected offering of our gratitude and love.

O Saviour mine, with joy I hymn that love  
Which spake to me, as thou didst speak of yore  
Bidding the sinful raise their hearts above,  
And in the strength of faith to sin no more.

I cannot bring thee box of spikenard sweet,  
To break, and pour its fragrance o'er thy head,  
Nor bathe with contrite tears thy hallowed feet,  
Nor scatter branches where those feet may tread.

But if a contrite heart can shed perfume,  
And penitential tears for sin can please;  
If aspirations on thy path may bloom;  
Then, Saviour, gladly I can bring thee these.

And, led by thee, I lift my soul in prayer,  
Believing that in heaven there is joy  
When one, repentant, cries in self-despair,  
Τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ ἰλάσθητί μοι.

## THE MEANING OF THE CROSS.

'EXCEPT a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' The seed, of course, does not die in the literal sense. Its analogy with human life and death depends on its burial and the surrender of its own individual existence, resulting in the production of much fruit. This announcement of a religious truth through a beautiful figure proclaims the law of the world's spiritual growth. It is dependent on the self-sacrifice of earth's noblest children. No enduring work of beneficence is accomplished without suffering, without the painful offering up of some portion of our life to God. If we consider only ourselves, and care only for the largest enjoyment of life within our reach, we abide alone, and no holy influence goes from us to fructify the souls of others. But if we are content that some joy should die, some perishing hope wither, some ambitious plan be mortified; if with incorruptible simplicity we accept the will of God as our only guide, and follow it through weariness and pain; if we are willing to bear even the exhaustion of the spiritual light within us, so that in many a dark hour we cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'—then, wherever we may be, whether addressing multitudes on the mountain side, or taking little children up in our arms and blessing them, or constrained to be silent and wait passively for the revealing of God's purposes, or tasting of bitterest sorrow for the sin and blindness of those who oppose themselves to the eternal Will, virtue will go out from us, and, in proportion to our self-consecration, will subdue the hearts of others, and teach them to glorify him whose Spirit is made manifest in us.

These thoughts suggest the meaning and effect of the crucifixion. John speaks of three objects: the glorifying of Jesus; through that, the glorifying of God; and through both, the drawing of all men to Christ. In order to understand this view we must go back in imagination to the

time, of this great tragedy. We must mingle with the friends and foes who remembered Jesus as an actual man, one who, without any proper training, and without authorization, had dared to stand forth as a religious reformer, a man of vast ideas and claims, who had miserably perished in a conflict with the rulers of his nation. We must try to share the passions and the controversies which his teaching and his fate had excited. We must feel his denunciations of hypocrisy, and his call to a spiritual righteousness, still ringing in our ears. We must find the piercing tones, the flashing eye, with which he confronted scribes and Pharisees, the tender pity with which he drew outcasts to himself, lingering still within our memory, and look upon love and hatred towards him contending for the mastery. Then we may see that the impressions which the crucifixion made upon men's minds were precisely those which we should expect from our knowledge of human nature.

By the mass of the Jews the crucifixion of Jesus was almost inevitably regarded as putting an end to his claims in the minds of all reasonable men. During his lifetime all judicious people looked upon him as a dangerous agitator, all orthodox people thought him blasphemous and arrogant almost to the verge of insanity; and at last through his ignominious death, he was known as a convicted impostor. He had trusted in God, as they had said with jeers at the crucifixion, but God had not delivered him, and therefore the Divine judgment was plainly given against him. This view was founded on the time-honoured belief that goodness and prosperity were inseparably connected. If a man suffered, he must have sinned; for God was the righteous Ruler of the world, and gave to every man according to his deserts. This seemed to have all the force of a fundamental axiom. God could not be unjust, and therefore could not inflict unmerited pain. No doubt, the fate of Jewish martyrs in times of persecution created a difficulty; but it was not sufficient to shake the general belief that pain was an evidence of sin. In any case the

crucifixion left no room for hesitancy, for the law had pronounced a distinct curse against everyone who was hanged on a tree. It therefore seemed proved, not only by reason, but by the infallible word of Scripture, that the pretended Messiah was a criminal on whom rested the Divine curse.

How, then, were the Christians able to maintain their faith, and to cleave to one whom God had apparently rejected? They could do so only by finding a deeper law underlying the mystery of pain. Even the cross could not persuade them that the teacher whom they had honoured and loved was a sinner. He had stirred strange depths within their being; he had opened to them visions of a heavenly life and holy communion with God, such as no other had presented; the spirit of his whole life was Divine, and this spirit it was which had led him directly to his death. Yes, the revered Master had died, not as a sinner, but in a conflict against sin. Had he been less righteous, and silenced the voice of God within him, he might have lived and prospered, and listened to the praise of men. Pain therefore was not necessarily a proof of sin. It was possible for the Son of God voluntarily to choose the way of suffering, and to offer up the complete self-sacrifice of love. Thus was awakened in the disciples' hearts a new ideal of life, an indwelling love, self-forgetting, self-renouncing, proving its depth and power by treading the path of scorn and suffering, that it might prevail with others, and draw them up into its own blessedness. Surely this was the eternal life, which was in the bosom of God, and was manifested in the Beloved, and most of all upon the cross.

Now, when we endeavour in imagination to throw ourselves back into the midst of these events, and see the crucifixion simply as a fact in the history of our world, what impression does it make upon us? That depends upon the state of our own minds, and we may experience quite opposite feelings as in varying moods we contemplate this affecting scene.

To our earthly mind, intent on ease and comfort, and seeking to secure these by conduct prudently virtuous, the



cross is simply horrible. We cannot satisfy ourselves with the view of Christ's ancient enemies, and exclaim, 'Serve him right! The punishment may have been a little cruel, but it was the due penalty of his own audacity and wickedness.' The judgment of history has pronounced him innocent, and condemned his execution as a judicial murder; and we accept that judgment; nay, we declare that he was the supremely righteous man, who had committed no sin that even in the high court of heaven could justify his condemnation. Yet heaven gave him over to the will of his enemies, though he 'offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death.' And so, with the old thought clinging about our hearts that goodness is a sort of useful way of earning happiness, we begin to doubt the providence of God, and think that he cares for neither the virtue nor the happiness of his children. If there is no deeper meaning behind the cross, which the spiritual eye may discern, the crucifixion is of all the scenes in history the fullest of sadness and despair.

It must have been from some such feeling that men resorted to doctrines of atonement as the solvent of their doubt. Still adhering to the axiom that suffering is the penalty of sin, they conceived the idea that Christ was punished, not for his own sins, but for the sins of others, and thus became the vicarious victim of the righteous wrath of God. God was desirous of saving men who had fallen under the dominion of sin through the guilt of Adam; but the eternal law of retribution stood in the way, and he could not carry out his purposes of love till the full penalty was paid. Hence arose the need of the incarnation, that an infinite Being might bear the immeasurable woe which was due to human wickedness, and that God, having thus had his justice satisfied, might be able to exercise his mercy, and save an elect remnant of mankind. It is a bold and consistent hypothesis; but it labours under the serious disadvantage of removing a less injustice by the introduction of a greater; for nothing can be more contrary to the

dictates of justice than punishing the innocent for the guilty. This view, moreover, fails to explain the sufferings of the good in other cases; for, by the hypothesis, this sacrifice was unique and final, and not the illuminating introduction of a new law of life. It is impossible for us to 'know the fellowship of his sufferings,' for those sufferings were the unimaginable anguish of an infinite Being, and the result of a judicial sentence pronounced against the sins of others.

Yet there is an element of truth in this view, the truth that the righteous may suffer for the unrighteous. But such suffering is not a punishment inflicted for the satisfaction of any inexorable and unforgiving justice. It is the free acceptance, by love, of the conditions which are needed for another's welfare; and thus it glorifies the sufferer through his spiritual exaltation. It is the pain of sympathy going forth to entwine itself with the anguish of the forlorn and lost. It is the torture of the martyr who, in the service of his brethren, dares to fight the forces of evil, and to endure whatever they may inflict upon him. Suffering is not necessarily the punishment of sin. It is often the reward of virtue, the chaplet of thorns upon the hero's brow, the supreme glory of spiritual power and victory. It is the splendour of love treading the *via dolorosa* with steps of triumph, and rising superior to physical pain through the greatness of its compassion. Thereby 'is the Son of Man glorified.' From this point of view we can see that the sacrifice of Christ has its analogy on the more ordinary levels of human life, and is a grand illustration of a general law. A youth leaps into a river to save a drowning friend; he saves him, but sinks himself, not to rise again alive; he has given his life for the life of another. A brave man rushes into the burning house to rescue a child; and when he has brought back his precious burden he faints through the fierceness of the pain. Have these men been punished for their sins? No! but by yielding to the command of their Father in heaven they have reaped a great reward, having gained for themselves and taught to

others the meaning and power of love. But such noble deeds are done through a momentary impulse, and we can often do in excitement that from which we shrink in our colder moods. Christ's sacrifice of himself was deliberate, and the consummation of a life of love. He had saved others; but he would not save himself, when the Spirit beckoned him on to the great renunciation. And further, it was in the strife against sin, and in an endeavour to save his brethren from their worst foes, error and wickedness, that he laid down his life. In the old words, 'he died for our sins.' Had he not thrown himself heart and soul into the attempt to establish the kingdom of heaven, and found a great brotherhood of the sons of God, he might have lived happy and blameless in his Galilean home. And what would have been the result? He would have gained a few years of obscure and ignoble comfort, and lost the permanent empire of the spiritual world. But now from the cross his love shines forth, stronger than pain and death, the one eternal power which nothing can subdue; and by that mighty magnet he is drawing all men to him.

What, then, is the relation of these things to God? In approaching this great subject we must remember that our language is only a figure, through which we represent to our thought that which is beyond expression. He whose reason sits enthroned among the stars, to whom a million ages are but as a moment, is infinitely above our comprehension. Nevertheless, there are gleams of his Spirit within us, and that which is highest in our consciousness is nearest to the Divine. And so we employ the figure of Father and Son to denote a transcendent reality, to which this figure most closely corresponds in our minds.

'Love is of God,' and 'he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.' These words, so expressive of the most intimate communion, are not limited in their application, but contain a universal truth. They are true of each of us just in proportion to the degree of our love. But the truth is ideal, indicating our goal rather than our attainment, and love is seldom so profound and

pure as to bear its own witness to the indwelling Spirit of God. In order to introduce the new reign of a Divine Humanity it was needful that this love should come with clear and singular manifestation of its heavenly nature and its victorious power; and what is true of every man to the degree in which he is moved by holy love was made transcendently true of Christ, in order that hearts susceptible of its influence might feel it, and believe, and enter into the same high communion. The love on the cross, then, was the indwelling love of God, and the impulse of this love, which sent Jesus to seek and save the lost, was the commandment which he freely accepted from his Father. 'Everyone who loveth is begotten of God'; and so he that loved absolutely, and showed on the cross the might and majesty of love, was begotten of God in the highest sense, drawing his life from the deep fountains of the eternal Spirit, the unique and beloved Son who was nearest to the Father's heart. The Father's name was glorified in the Son.

These things are still drawing the hearts of men, and drawing them all the more powerfully as we learn to gaze upon them with childlike simplicity, and allow them to make their own impression on the mind. Our temptation in the desert may be long, and our souls may hunger and thirst; but victory and refreshment will come at last. Sin is not to reign for ever. If not through visions and revelations of the Lord, if not through startling appeal to our emotions, yet through secret and silent channels God's grace will flow into our hearts, and he will give to our prayers all that we ought to ask. Only let us remember that we must not close the door of our hearts, but keep it open day and night, that the messengers of God's love may come in. The great sacrifice is repeated, not through vain ceremonies, but only in the life of love, and it is there alone that its blessed effects are realized. Love should beget love, and bind earth and heaven together by a golden chain of communion. 'We love him because he first loved us,' and he is always more ready to give than

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we are to receive. For hear the words of the Spirit,—  
 'I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the  
 water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these  
 things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.'

*Nûn ἡ ψυχὴ μου τετάρακται.*

(Now has my soul been troubled.)

O sorrow, sorrow, slow and sad  
 The days pass now, in mourning clad,  
 With solemn step, through mist and gloom,  
 To end in darkness of the tomb.

O sorrow, thou hast reached, me, thou,  
 And touched with grief my anguished brow,  
 And youth's bright visions vanish quite  
 Within the sable folds of night.

Now troubled is my soul in me,  
 As I behold the fatal tree.  
 Ah! what shall I beseeching say  
 Amid the terror of this day?

I will not God's deep pity crave  
 Me from this dreadful hour to save.  
 Nay! Father, glorify thy name  
 E'en through the horror and the shame.

I hear a heavenly voice reply,  
 In thee my name I'll glorify,  
 And chase the night of pain and scorn,  
 Suffused with rays of orient morn.

And lo! an angel, bending down,  
 Lays on my head a glorious crown;  
 And I, resigned to threatening ill,  
 Rest in my Father's blessed will.

Πάτερ, δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα.

(Father, glorify thy name.)

• When with wrung hearts,, we fear temptation's power,  
And, drawn by weak suggestions of despair,  
Distrust our force of will, we breathe the prayer,  
‘ O God, in mercy save us from this hour.’  
But when faith comes, conveying heaven's rich dower  
Of self-renouncing strength, with joy we dare  
To cry to God, ‘ this sacrifice prepare,  
And glorify thy name, though storms may lower.’  
Then on the heart soft words in answer fall,—  
‘ Oft have I glorified it in the past  
Through martyr pangs and faith's triumphant might,  
And still will glorify myself in all  
Whose trust in Me endures unto the last,  
And guides through darkness towards eternal light.

O God, be all the glory thine,  
Be all the praise and thanks,  
From men who love thee here below,  
And angels' shining ranks.

All holy life is thine alone ;  
In thee is all our might ;  
And in the heart's calm silent depths  
We see thy blessed light.

We can but follow where thou lead'st,  
And clasp thy saving hand ;  
And thou alone canst give us grace  
In steadfast faith to stand,

To stand when fiery darts of sin  
Would pierce our armour frail,  
Did not thy Spirit's hallowed power  
Cause weakness to prevail.

O Dweller in the soul, we come  
 And seek thy aid in prayer  
 For we would pray, and never faint,  
 Or yield to chill despair.

And when the crown of life is placed  
 Upon the victor's head,  
 To thee be all the glory given  
 Who quickenest the dead.

*Πάντας ἐλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν.*

(I will draw all men to myself.)

O Saviour mine, how shall I sing thy praise ?  
 For I, with sin-dimmed eyes, behold from far  
 The splendour of those clear immortal rays  
 Which shine amid our guilt, like some pure star.

In thee the fulness of the Love Divine  
 Came seeking all the weary and the lost ;  
 And men, in wonder, felt thy grace benign,  
 Who on life's stormy sea had long been tossed.

Those who were hardened by the world's cold scorn  
 In thy forgiving sympathy found peace ;  
 For thou, without reproach, didst gently warn,  
 And bid the tumult of wild passion cease.

Me too thy love has found, and laid its spell  
 Upon the anguish of my inner strife ;  
 And in glad accents I would meekly tell  
 How thou didst bring to me eternal life.

And I would bring a chaplet of renown,  
 And lay it humbly at the Victor's feet ;  
 For thou wilt not disdainfully look down,  
 But with a loving smile thy captive greet.

With earnest faith we own thy kingly sway  
O'er all the great, and every earthly throne ;  
Oh ! come the holy radiance of that day  
When all the world thy blessed rule shall own.

### THE GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN.

WE have already learned something of the nature of true glory ; but in the last supper with his disciples Jesus sought to bring it home to their hearts by an impressive symbolic act, washing their feet, and thus emptying himself of all human pride, and taking on him 'the form of a slave.' The lesson which he wished to illustrate was this, that true greatness consists in humility, the denial of all selfish ambition, the loving service of others ; and when we are proud and scornful, when we are restless and dissatisfied unless our supposed merits be duly recognized and our superior rights maintained, then, whatever may be our position or abilities, we are paltry in character, and have yet to learn with sorrow of heart the very elements of Christian faith. And so, when the traitor had gone forth, and the final scene was about to open, Jesus, knowing that 'he that humbleth himself is exalted,' exclaimed, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.' In truth it was even so ; and the throne of the Cæsars has yielded to the glory of the cross of Christ. 'God has highly exalted him.'

For one who valued glory according to the ordinary acceptance of the word no prospect, at that time, could have been more gloomy. The leaders of the people were bent on the destruction of Jesus. The populace who had lately given him such an enthusiastic reception were fickle, and likely soon to acquiesce in his condemnation. There was treachery among his own chosen twelve. No applauding party supported him in his last painful hours. Not only was death before him, but his labours appeared to have



## 138      The Glory of the Son of Man

produced no permanent effect, and his name would be covered with an undeserved obloquy. Yet he felt that to meet death in calm reliance on the providence of God would be to tread the path of true honour; and to bow in perfect submission to the Divine will, and accept the doom of a malefactor, would be, whatever men might say of it, not infamous, but glorious. He knew that he had God's approval, and man's opinion became insignificant. Here we see the great distinction between the Christian's love of glory and that which is still so prevalent in the world. We are apt to seek honour one from another, and are sensitive to every breath of applause or blame. We ought to seek the approbation of God, and feel that the homage of kneeling multitudes is not to be put in the balance against it. Let us have faith in God, and the highest and the proudest will become nothing to us. We are always in a presence than which there can be none greater. If his voice tells us that we have done wrong, the praise of men is bitterness. If his peace is in our souls, the vituperation of men cannot disturb our serenity. We may lawfully seek the honour that comes from him alone; for what he approves must be essentially and unchangeably good. Thus, as soon as God becomes to us the great reality, our love of glory identifies itself with the love of goodness, and tends ever to the same end. We seek, with self-forgetting simplicity, that which is in itself glorious. We no longer lower our conduct to the level of human opinion, but aspire to that which God and all who have his Spirit must approve. When this is our standard, the hour of betrayal and ignominy upon earth may be the time of our glorification in heaven. Never are we so near to God as when, through faith in him, we rise superior to the world, and manifest the power of his love in our hearts. The darkness of adversity causes the light of the soul to shine with greater lustre. Christ was glorious in his life; but he was more glorious in his death, for then he showed forth with the greatest clearness his self-sacrificing goodness. So it always is, had we but eyes to see it. To do the will

of God is man's true glory ; and no profane or treacherous hand can pluck from our heads this eternal crown.

But there is another thought greater than any thought of honour for ourselves. Just in so far as we do the will of God, God is glorified in us. It is not so much our goodness as his that we manifest. Christ felt that he acted under the power of God's indwelling Spirit, and that Spirit was revealed in every true word and deed. That depth of love which moved him to suffer and to die for sinful men was an efflux of that love which causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good. And when we look back with grateful memory to the cross, we feel that there is more than the love and sympathy of earth, that there is a shining of that spiritual glory which abides eternally in the heavens. Is not an everlasting law here shadowed forth ? We must not rob Christ's solemn words of their meaning by our theological definitions. The Son of Man reveals the universal laws of the spiritual world. In us too, awful as is the thought for beings so imperfect, God may be glorified. We know his Spirit within us by no doubtful marks. And when we allow that Spirit to guide us, and no personal sacrifice can turn us from following whither it leads, we manifest the goodness of God, and make his glory known. It is strange that the poor baubles, which the world offers can ever attract our gaze from an honour such as this. Fame, wealth, power, what are these compared with a soul in which men see, however dimly, a reflection of God ? We covet them, and when we obtain them our hungry nature is less satisfied than when we began our search. They can never fill even the very longing which has led us astray. In God alone can our varying motives find at once their satisfaction and their purity. Would we be glorious, let us glorify Him by our humility, guilelessness, and love. Would we reign as kings, let us acknowledge that to him alone belong the kingdom and the power. If God be glorified in us, God will also glorify us in himself. If his will be our one law, we shall know that law more and more clearly. If his Spirit be

our one chosen guide, we shall receive that Spirit in greater and greater fulness. Our communion will become more intimate. The conflict between duty and desire will cease, and every power which God has given us will help us forward on our upward path. Let us, then, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, set our affections on things above; and let the cross signify to us, not only or chiefly the pain of self-denial, but the glory of spiritual victory, and awaken within us an enthusiastic devotion to God, from which temptation will recoil powerless, and through which our souls shall be raised to the true dignity and exaltation of their sonship.

From all this the declaration naturally follows that our discipleship must be known by our love. When the Church substituted the acceptance of dogma for the impress of the Spirit it committed an act of apostasy, and, while formally appealing to the authority of this Gospel, repudiated its pervasive teaching. 'He that loveth not abideth in death. Everyone that hates his brother is a murderer.' And to those who have eyes to see, the same lesson is luminous throughout the New Testament. A holy, regenerated life of love is its continual promise and demand. 'If a man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

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As he who came from God and went to God,  
Midst strivings of man's fretful dignity  
And angry contests who should greatest be,  
Our sinful earth with lowliest footsteps trod,  
And, breathing love, when raged ambition's storm  
And jealous fires flashed from the eye of pride,  
Drew bashful childhood gently to his side,  
Or, grandly meek, assumed a servant's form;  
So be it ours, with lowly, reverent mind,  
Wearing humility on saintly brow,  
With heart from selfishness and scorn refined,  
Before our Father's holy will to bow.  
To Christ's pure faith be all our thoughts inclined;  
Thus love unfading will our spirits bind.

## The Glory of the Son of Man 141

Νῦν ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

(Now has the Son of Man been glorified.)

A promontory bold and high  
Drew heavenward my awed and trembling glance ;  
And while it seemed to pierce the sky,  
It looked abroad o'er ocean's wide expanse.

A thousand storms had darkened o'er  
The grand defiance of that mighty rock,  
Which proudly scorned the thunder's roar,  
And spurned in foam the billow's angry shock.

Its haughty head was wreathed in cloud ;  
It claimed affinity with hoary time ;  
It never to the tempest bowed ;  
Resolved, erect, majestic, and sublime.

But empires proud have passed away,  
Their power fleeting, and their glory brief ;  
Their towers have sunk in foul decay,  
And monarchs' crowns were as a fading leaf.

And thou hast stood, imperial pile,  
And watched man's work slow crumbling into dust ;  
Unharm'd, while weapons flashed awhile,  
Then, hopeless, yielded to corroding rust.

Beneath thy calm and awful brow  
How vain ambition's pomp and wealth's display !  
With reverential awe I bow,  
And see earth's pride fade like a dream away.

And thou, lone watcher of the sea,  
Dost lay thy impress on the waiting soul,  
And, humbled, we behold in thee  
The royal law which should man's heart control.

## The Closing Scenes

For, solemnized by thee, we feel  
That truest glory there alone is found  
Where men in lowly worship kneel,  
And own themselves to God's pure service bound.

Who is the greatest ? He alone  
Whose self-forgetting love divinely serves,  
Who, seeking nothing for his own,  
Chooses the right, and true, and never swerves.

He shall abide, while ages roll,  
A servant, yet the monarch of all time,  
Secure in majesty of soul,  
Shedding God's glory over every clime.

Hail Son of Man ! We know thee now,  
Unmoved while earthly sceptres broken lie ;  
A cloud of glory gilds thy brow,  
And thou dost still the shocks of time defy.

Oh ! speak to us in accents clear,  
And teach our hearts the secret of thy love,  
That we, through lowly service here,  
May reach at last the eternal home above.

## THE SACREDNESS OF THE CLOSING SCENES.

In approaching chapters which have given comfort and strength to many generations we cannot but come with quiet and timid steps. We cannot help fearing that the truth may only suffer by our attempts to express it ; and, as in the presence of the finest scenery speech is denied to us, and we can only gaze and still gaze, our hearts are so full of its beauty, so there are religious truths which are

ineffable, and when we have said all that our tongue can find to say, we feel that our deepest meaning is left untold. With many passages of Scripture it would please us best to meditate on their profound truths and consoling assurances in the silence of our own souls, feeling in them a spirit which we cannot grasp, and fearful lest any motion of our own or of others should drive it away. Yet such is the deadening influence of habit that truths of the highest import and sentiments of rarest delicacy often escape our attention till we force our minds to a systematic study, and endeavour to express the same truths or sentiments in our own language. It also requires an effort to free ourselves from misleading associations of the past. Too often the deepest meaning has been obscured by clouds of controversy; and in the disputes of a subtle theology the quickening truths for which the human heart thirsts have been thrust into the back-ground. May some of the great and illuminating ideas of these chapters bring their own beautiful message to our minds, while we meditate on them with humble and receptive hearts.

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*Μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδιά.*

(Let not your heart be troubled.)

The mountain hid its head in storm and gloom,  
And purple shadows veiled its furrowed side,  
While dark beneath fretted the sullen tide •  
As though in dread of some mysterious doom.  
Then through a rift appear'd the tender blue,  
Revealing near the pure and joyous light,  
And softening the stern scene's oppressive night •  
With kindly gleams of heaven's perennial hue.  
Thus, when the mists of care weep o'er the mind,  
And cast their shadow on the sadden'd heart,  
And mute despair steals o'er our earthly day,  
The hands of faith the heavy folds unbind,  
And through the rift hope shows the better part,  
God's love and peace, most true, nor far away.

## THE FATHER SEEN IN THE SON.

'HE that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' These words unquestionably imply a consciousness of intimate communion between God and Christ, and none of us, in our present condition, would think of using them. But the surprise of Jesus at Philip's request shows that he referred to something which a disciple, acquainted with his teaching and character, might be expected to understand. This request betrayed a dulness of spiritual apprehension. It was strange that one who had heard from Christ's own lips the doctrine of the spirituality of God, and of his nearness to the human soul, and who had seen the reality of communion with him attested by a life which reflected the glory of his Spirit, should still speak of the Father as though he were far away, hidden from men by the darkness of his nature and not the blindness of theirs, and as though by one claiming to be his messenger he ought to be brought near, and shown before the physical eye. It seemed that even chosen Apostles, to whom he had opened his most private thought, to whom more than to any others he had declared the Father, and shown the depths of Divine love in his own heart,—even they did not know him, had not read the mysteries of faith in a soul entirely consecrated, or learned that the Father who is Spirit can be revealed only in spirit. Was that communion of which he was so vividly conscious a dark riddle to them? And while he lived in the Father, and the Father in him, while he felt, 'all mine are thine, and thine are mine,' did they believe themselves still orphans, men that would be left alone and comfortless when he was snatched from their presence on earth? One hope he had for them. They loved him; and love is the key of knowledge. When he was gone they would know him better. The impression of his life with God would sink deeper and deeper into them; and when he could no longer present himself before the fleshly eye he would manifest himself

in their souls. And thus he and his disciples would at last be bound together in a blessed communion, and become one in the Spirit of the Father.

• We must dwell upon this truth. Spirit is revealed in spirit. The moral attributes of God, holiness, justice, love, may dwell in man, and in proportion to their fulness and power manifest those attributes as they exist in God. It is only by our knowledge of them in man that we know them in God; and if in human nature they be dwarfed and perverted, we cannot see them as they exist in the Divine. Every man, therefore, who by the spirit of his life exalts our ideal of moral perfection becomes to us so far a revealer of God; for in him we see more of the Divine Spirit than we saw before. And if there were anyone with heart so pure, with soul so devout, with will so surrendered, that in him the higher Spirit found no obstruction, but was allowed to show itself freely in the words and conduct, he would be the revealer of the Father, and in reading his spirit we should read, not his, but the Spirit of God. God might doubtless employ other means to make known his fatherly character; and if it had pleased him to make us independent of one another, he could always flash the direct rays of knowledge into our minds. But we have been placed in endless interdependence; and different men have varying gifts, to be used for the common good. So, in the realm of religion, we receive light from one another, and, deriving help from those above us, we climb through the long gradation of souls. Nothing like the wonderful mechanism of the human body can disclose the most passing phases of thought and feeling, or cause so prompt a recognition of these by others. Goodness described does not illumine the darkened soul like goodness beaming from the face or glowing in the kind pressure of the hand. And therefore, if we would make the Father known, it must not be by mere instruction, for words are vain where there is not first a mutual understanding; but to us too the saying must be applicable, 'a body hast thou prepared for me,' a holy shrine where the Spirit of



## 146      The Father seen in the Son

God may dwell, and, penetrating heart and soul and will, shine forth in the world around.

If this be a universal spiritual law, it is not difficult for us to fix on Jesus of Nazareth as the one man in whom the Divine Spirit fully dwelt, the Head of the great hierarchy of souls, 'the image of the invisible God,' and the first-born of all that higher creation in which God is known and worshipped. To him the early disciples, and innumerable followers since, have, through their own experience, borne witness. It is in his sublime figure, sublime in his lowly surrender of self, that we discover all the beauty of that image in which man was created. It is in his face, bright with the conscious indwelling of the Father, that we see most clearly the glories of that upper world towards which our souls feebly aspire. His love, so strong and simple and self-denying, his calm preference for the right as better than ease and prosperity, his sympathy, so tender, so quick, so discriminating,—do not these reveal to us the loving-kindness of God, and his unvarying righteousness? Where have the sinful and the sorrowing found such peace as in him, the meek and lowly one, who not only tells them of a Father, but looks upon them with eyes full of the light of his Spirit, and speaks in tones which thrill the heart and make it conscious of an unknown love? Wonderful glory of self-abnegation! In seeing him we see the Father; and while we gaze, we almost forget that lonely man of sorrows, sitting tired on the well, wearily sleeping in his disciples' boat, or fainting under his cross, so full are we also of that solemn Presence which enfolds both us and him.

This is the revelation which the human heart desires and needs. The philosopher indeed may think lightly of it while all his attention is absorbed in some high speculation. But the soaring thought of the philosopher can interest only the few, and abides not in the houses of the poor; and when sorrow broods heavily over his home, even he finds that all is vanity without the presence of eternal love, and that in Christ are depths which philosophy has

not explored. Again, we speak sometimes of the revelation of God in nature. And truly, when we know God, nature is full of him, and everything we see may convey some lesson to the soul. But if we knew him from no other source, could nature impress us with more than a vague idea of immense power, wisdom, and perhaps a general kindness of plan? Should we understand God's love, and know him as a Father? Should we not feel lost in the vast range of his government, and conceive ourselves not as the children of a family, where each is cared for as if he were the only one, but as the subjects of an empire, where individual life is of little value? The mountain with its stupendous precipices and misty ravines, the ocean with its immeasurable sweep and the ceaseless play of its waters, the heaven peopled with myriads of worlds which for incalculable ages have been moving in their orderly and silent course, and which stretch away into distances where the imagination is lost,—these may humble, awe, crush us, but, apart from a holy and interpreting spirit, make it more difficult to believe that there is aught in us akin to the almighty Ruler, and that the conscious soul is grander than all material forms. Till the soul has put her own voice into them, these sublime works of creation do not speak to our sadness, our remorse, our wounded affection, our sorrowful aspirations for an eternal good. We do not turn to them when our souls are cast down and our hearts disquieted within us. God comes not to us then in the fire, the earthquake, or the storm, but in the still small voice of humanity, in his servant whom he has chosen, his beloved in whom he is well pleased. Character can be revealed only in a person, the Father only in the Son. This men of religious insight have felt age after age, and have derived their deepest knowledge of God from gazing on his manifestation in Christ. In him we have a revelation which addresses itself to the universal heart, not a system of doctrines which only a few can understand or appreciate, not a philosophy from which the poor and ignorant must keep

far away, but a gentle and beautiful soul clothed in Divine goodness, a spirit caught up into perfect communion with the Spirit of God, a beloved Son full of grace and truth.

But we may have been a long time with Christ, and yet have not known him. We may be familiar with all the circumstances recorded of him, and yet know nothing of what he thought and felt, how he loved and suffered and prayed and triumphed. Without this interior knowledge it is of small importance to make ourselves acquainted with his history or to construct our doctrine. A revelation can be given only to a mind which is actively receptive; and unless we have, through prayerful meditation, interpreted his soul, and at least in sympathy have loved and suffered and prayed and conquered with him, we have not really known him; and our outward attachment to him, of which we are so proud, may only excite a sorrowful wonder that we can have been so long under his influence, and yet have understood him so little. To watch with him one hour, to pray lest we enter into temptation, conduces more to our eternal peace than to be familiar with all the arguments of the learned. Here too the child-like heart has glimpses of truth which are hidden from the wise and prudent.

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Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδός.

(I am the way.)

Oh! tell to me, thou pilgrim pale,  
Will any efforts yet avail,  
Or can I find some helping hand  
To lead me to the beauteous land?  
For I of sin have burden great,  
And scarce can reach the heavenly gate.

The pilgrim answered with a smile,  
'If thou would'st hopeless thoughts beguile,  
Forget thyself and thine own loss,

And humbly bow beneath the cross,  
He made as though he would depart,  
And leave me with my lonely heart.

But stay, I cried, and tell me true  
If I may then advance with you ;  
And if I gaze upon the cross,  
And turn my eyes from self and loss,  
Shall I indeed behold the light  
That shines amid our mortal night ?

And shall I then, with chastened will,  
Forsake the sordid ways of ill,  
And, guided by a saving hand,  
Attain at last the blessed land,  
Where I shall serve the Love Divine,  
And think no more of ' me ' or ' mine,'

But clear perceive, with cleansed eye,  
That God himself is always nigh,  
While he absorbs my every thought  
Through wondrous grace in me inwrought,  
And all desire sinks down to rest,  
Save loving what to him seems best ?

The pilgrim turned, and lo ! his face  
Shone with a sweet and tender grace.  
The glory of that look sufficed ;  
One moment's glance revealed the Christ.  
And ' Come,' he said, ' and follow me,  
And I your faithful guide will be ;

' For when we God alone adore,  
We find our life for ever more.  
I too have seen the bitter strife  
That rends with sorrow mortal life,  
For I have borne the heavy cross,  
And suffered all that men count loss,

'But offering self became the way  
That leads unto eternal day. .  
Then tread with me the path I trod,  
That leads away from self to God,  
And thou shalt lay thy burden down,  
And wear life's amaranthine crown.'

### LOVE AND OBEDIENCE.

JESUS said, 'If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.' Obedience, then, is his test of love; and if these gentle words we hear the announcement and confirmation of the principle which was so sternly declared by the ancient prophet, 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.' To understand the full force of this statement we must remember that Christ's precepts are essentially moral, an expansion and fulfilment of the great moral law which was the most glorious inheritance of the Jewish race. The love that comes with cheap gifts and honied epithets, but has no strength for the daily duties of life, is of a spurious quality; and though it is true that a little affection is worth more than much service without affection, it is also true that genuine love begets the highest form of service, and, apart from service, soon degenerates into a sickly sentimentality. The man who really loves Christ will assuredly study his words, seek to penetrate into his spirit and to understand his great guiding principles, and earnestly endeavour to shape his life accordingly. It is only thus that we can really honour Christ, and not by loud professions and formal observances, or by contempt and rudeness for his sake towards those who follow not with us. A creed or a ceremony may indeed be a genuine expression of the heart's emotion, and we have seen that Christ did not look with disapproval on the gift of a box of spikenard, which possessed no moral utility,

and served only to express the deep love with which he was regarded. It is in the nature of love thus to express itself in useless ways, by actions or words which have no meaning apart from the emotion which gives them birth. But such things are not prescribed; indeed they owe all their value to their perfect spontaneity. The anointing of the feet of Jesus was the spontaneous overflowing of an emotion which could find no other utterance, and it could not have been imitated and repeated by another with the same effect. Intellectual or ritual acts, on the other hand, which are formally prescribed and constantly repeated must tend to become mere habits, and may even sink into heartless superstitions. But the daily offering of the life, the continual endeavour to meet new duties in Christ's spirit, the consecration of the thoughts and feelings, the words and deeds, both in our private moments and in our intercourse with others, are an evidence that the love which they express is sincere and deep; and where that love abides as a motive power, the actions follow.

It may be said that Christ deals very tenderly with what may be called sins of weakness, faults which spring not so much from a depraved will as from want of moral strength and balance, and that he willingly accepts tokens of affection from those who had strayed far from the path of rectitude, and that this indeed was so characteristic as to draw down on him the reproach of the more respectable members of society. Yes, but he acted in this way, not because he valued a love which could make no sacrifices for its object, but in order to save the sinner from despair, and to waken within a mind which was more susceptible of affection than alive to the claims of duty an energy of love which would bring order and force into the debilitated character. He was quick to discern the signs of inward goodness, the smoke amid the flax that might be fanned into a flame. But he never accepted love as a substitute for duty, but assumed that, if love were genuine, duty would follow as its necessary fruit.

These considerations may show us how we can test our

love to Christ, and may save us from being content with a spectral emotion instead of that calm dedication of the whole life which alone deserves such an exalted name.

And now we must view for a moment the other side of the truth,—‘He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.’ Love must be the root from which our obedience grows. That love is of higher value than mere obedience may be most fully admitted; and it is only when ritual observance is represented as a truer expression of love than obedience to the moral law that an objection must be raised. ‘The word which ye hear,’ said Christ, ‘is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.’ What he preached was the eternal law of right, as we must conceive it to exist in all worlds, the imperial mandate of Him who occupies the throne of the universe; and the one thing which he denounces with unmeasured rebuke is the substitution of ritual scrupulosity, after the traditions of men, for justice, mercy, and truth, which are required by the commandments of God. Nevertheless, it is true that obedience must have its root in love, and that apart from this it is of small spiritual value. It is conceivable that obedience to the moral law might be proud and cold and formal, and have no worthier motive than an enlightened self-interest; and then it could not prove that the heart was right towards God. But in this matter I think we are liable to very mistaken judgments. It has been often assumed, as indeed it was assumed of Jesus himself, that a life apparently good has no religious basis because the men who manifest it do not walk in the ordinary ways of religion, do not accept the current opinions or attend the fashionable church, and are not much given to speaking of their religious sentiments. Such men, it is said, are trying to be saved by good works, through which they hope to merit the favour of God. But, for my part, I doubt whether such a thought ever enters their minds; and I do not believe that a life of pure and simple devotion to duty exists without some secret love and worship in the soul. Even if a man who exhibits such a life has lost hold

of all the great verities of religion, still the duty itself becomes a semi-personal ideal which is above him and commands his homage; and if he can see nothing else, it is because he is dazzled by the moral splendour which shines as a supernal light, irradiating the world. But how many men against whom the reproaches of the popular churches have been levelled have derived the beauty of their holiness from a conscious love to Christ and to God, a love too deep for utterance, too calm for ecstasy. Where we see the tree putting forth beautiful leafage and bearing wholesome fruit, we may be sure that its root is good.

If this be true, it follows that not only is obedience without love of small spiritual value, but without love it must be very incomplete. It is by touching the heart, and stirring up our affection towards a great spiritual leader, that Christianity brings a new redeeming strength into the moral life. We are no longer confronted with abstractions, but see the heavenly life embodied in our humanity. We are no longer tied down to formal precepts, but behold in a living soul a spirit of life, which frames its own rules, and freely adapts itself to the changing circumstances of our being. And this loving Saviour of men, who found the moral law in his own heart, and offered himself up as a holy sacrifice that he might communicate his own life to the world, draws us to himself in reverent love; and love reads the secret of his heart, and takes to itself the same law of life. Thus the disciples' love to him widens out, and, becoming identical with his, rises in worship to the throne of God, and finds there the life eternal which has been for ever in the bosom of God, and which dwelt so richly in Christ as through him to claim the world as its own; and thence descending it flows forth towards all mankind, and makes its works of kindness a humble offering of gratitude to him who first wakened it into conscious activity. It is thus that, if Christ's idea were realized, there would be a communion of saints, a society of men in whom the Christ-life would pulsate, and who would be bound to one another as brethren through



their common reverence for the same transcendent spirit. But while we wait for the time when good men will no longer be separated from one another by idle ceremonies and the speculations of a too inquisitive and arrogant intellect, let us seek for ourselves that blessed life, that through the mysterious power of love Christ may be formed in us, and that we may walk worthily of our high calling in him as children of the heavenly Father.

Ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει.  
(He that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.)

Come, O my Father, fill my heart with love,  
And raise me into fellowship with thee ;  
Set my affections still on things above,  
And grant me meekness, faith, and purity.

On thy all-seeing wisdom I depend,  
And would not hasten to my work alone ;  
Cleanse me from self, thy Holy Spirit send,  
And let me inly hear thy pleading tone.

Away from thee all is a desert waste,  
Wherein we roam in selfishness and pride,  
And towards deceitful visions madly haste,  
And clutch earth's phantoms, which can ne'er abide.

On thee, Eternal, let my soul repose ;  
To thy blest will let each desire be bent ;  
Be thou my guide till all my wanderings close,  
And I restore the blessings thou hast lent.

Ὁ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατήρ.  
(The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send.)

Come, Holy Spirit, with thy cleansing fire,  
And sanctify my heart from all desire  
That does not to thy purity aspire.  
Come, oh ! come.

Alone I wander, seeking for some love  
To lift my drooping thoughts to things above.  
Come, as of old, descending like a dove :  
Come, oh ! come.

Come to my burdened soul, and bring relief :  
Chase from my mind all sinful unbelief :  
And change to rapture the sad look of grief.  
Come, oh ! come.

## • THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

To thousands of troubled souls the chapters which record the intimate conversation between Jesus and his loved disciples have been a source of comfort and peace. For in listening to these parting words we seem to get nearer to the Saviour's heart than in his more public utterances, and we receive that legacy of spiritual faith and joy which this man, so poor in the world's goods, bequeathed in his last hours to his immediate disciples, and through them to distant generations. Fain would we sit, like Mary, at his feet, and forget all else while we drink in his words, and feel the touch of his victorious love upon our hearts. And even if we think that we have here, not a precise record of what was actually spoken, but the impression left on a disciple by the closing scenes, the old lesson remains unimpaired, retaining no longer the hard outlines of mere earthly events, but coming in the suggestiveness of heavenly forms seen through a halo of spiritual glory. We still are subdued by the words, 'Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' What if these sentences were never actually spoken by the mortal lips of Jesus, do they not still admit us into the holy calm of that sweet and gracious soul ? And may they not be all the more impressive if they contain

at the same time the experience of a disciple to whom the Lord spake in the spirit, and who had known throughout his long and troubled life the healing power of that legacy of peace which he had received from the dying Christ ?

The words originally had reference to the sorrow of bereavement, and the vexations and troubles of the world. Jesus was about to encounter an agonizing and ignominious death. His disciples were to be left, to all appearance, orphaned, separated from that great and loving heart, so unlike any they had ever known, destined no more to listen to words of Divine wisdom from those lips that spoke as never man had spoken. They were to struggle with that feeling of emptiness, groping half incredulous of its loss, which falls upon the mind when some abounding power and joy has gone out of our lives. And before them, ill equipped as they were with worldly weapons to meet the world's buffets and scorn, stretched in long vista tribulation, persecutions, perhaps a violent death. Yet in this sorrowful and apparently disastrous hour Jesus was full of peace ; and the aged disciple, looking back through the checkered years, felt that the beloved Master had returned to him in spirit, revealing many things which he had not understood, and along with the legacy of sorrow bestowing on him at the same time the secret of peace. He believed in God, and this belief had been quickened by its living power in Christ into a vivid faith and intimate communion ; and he believed also in Jesus, and saw in his transcendent spirit the eternal life of redeemed humanity ; and his heart was no longer troubled or afraid. So it has always been. Whenever the religion of Jesus completely subjugates the heart it produces a heavenly calmness and evenness of mind. Let us try to enter into the source and nature of this peace of Christ.

The Gospels tell us little of the inner life of Jesus. But without the violation of a soul's sanctuary we are able to gather from the general tenour of his life and teaching, and from some casual expressions, what were the central springs of his activity, what the character of the faith which

sustained him. It is abundantly evident that his soul lay ever open towards God, to receive the inflowing of the Divine Spirit. He felt that God was his Father, who had bestowed on him the communion of love. And hence to do the will of God was his supreme end; to rest in that will as alone good was his abiding comfort. He would bring men to the same high communion, and fill them with the same perfect trust; and then they would have peace.

Christ's doctrine of the heavenly Father, when once it is realized as a fact of experience, dissipates the alarms and crimes and fiery anguish which have sprung from false notions of God. Love reigns, infinite, eternal, and supreme, far above the frets of human passion or the anger of personal slights. In that Love we rest, and ask no more. To love him, because he first loved us,—this is to have peace from all the foul fancies of an affrighted imagination; and when we enter truly into the fellowship of Christ, we feel that God is the one friend who cannot change, and in whose keeping all the souls of our beloved are safe.

Again, the faith of Christ brings peace to the heart when suffering under the sense of sin. I refer not now to a state of deliberate wickedness, which is open enmity against God, and, whatever may be its satisfactions, is self-excluded from the blessed and holy calm of one who rests in God. I refer to the case of one who, like St. Paul, has endeavoured to live in all good conscience, who delights in the law of God after the inward man, but is borne down by a humbling sense of imperfection and failure. It is indeed when the eye is strained towards the Divine splendour that the sense of sin rises with its dark shadows, and we look with the dismay of baffled effort at that perfect righteousness which the will of God enjoins. Is there any peace for a mind which is torn by this inward struggle, and, turn where it will, beholds only visions of sin and judgment? There can be none so long as we stand at a distance from God, and regard him only as the holy impersonation of the moral law who has laid down his conditions, and left us to our-

selves to break or to fulfil them. Then he is, in our view, the just, but inexorable Judge, whose condemnation it is impossible for us to évade; and the more earnestly we assent to the righteousness of his demands, the more does it seem as if sin held us in its terrible clutches, and would not let us go. God is in his holy temple; but we are upon alien ground, vainly striving to satisfy his just requirements. Where, then, is peace to be found? In Christ's doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood, and in the filial spirit which comes from faith in that Fatherhood. We no longer stand over against God, the affrighted slaves, who offer a trembling and imperfect obedience to the great Taskmaster; but we are in the home of God, folded to his bosom, and weeping forth to that pitying heart our sorrow for sin and our longing for redemption. And lo! the sense of being forgiven steals upon us, and love begins to render spontaneously the obedience which had proved so impossible to the eager will. Not indeed that all struggle is for ever past. Though we have received the earnest of the Spirit, we still groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, the absolute realization of our sonship. But how changed and softened is this striving of the spirit to bear its perfect fruit. We are now on the side of God; and there is no more condemnation, for we are in communion with Him. In all our frailties his redeeming love stands by; and if his holiness in its awful purity is still there, it is a holiness that imparts itself, and comes, not to condemn, but to seek and save. Thus our hearts are at rest, and even amid our sense of sin some measure of the peace of the sinless One abides with us. In the dread anticipation of judgment and the fierce pain of moral struggle, there is some taint of self; and when the love of self is wholly lost in the love of God, we shall look no more within, full of impatient bitterness at our own imperfections, but we shall lift our worshipping gaze to Him who is the one Source of truth, righteousness, and love, waiting for the inflowing of his life, and assured that he will do all things, within us and without, according to his own good pleasure, and in the time which he sees fit

will give us the victory. In this faith may we abide, and be at peace.

And once more, there is a Christian peace in relation to the sufferings, the disappointments, and the anxieties of life. We are not indeed to be calmly indifferent towards the cry of pain that goes up from an afflicted world ; for this would be to wrap ourselves in selfish isolation, and to stifle our divinest sympathies. Quite apart from the moral sphere there is a realm (call it evil or not as you like) where all that is best in us desires to effect a change, and where the love which God himself has implanted in our bosoms impels us to labour for the alleviation of what we cannot but regard as ills. The optimism which believes that everything is an immediate expression of the Divine will, and is therefore the best possible, which would only be spoiled by our interference, is not founded on Christian faith. Christ indeed believed that not a sparrow could fall to the ground without his Father's will ; yet who so soon as he would have picked up the little creature, and tended the broken wing, that he might send it forth again in happy flight ? Nor did he reprove the shepherd who wandered over the desert in search of the stray sheep, and carried the tired animal home upon his shoulders. He came himself to be a Saviour and Consoler, to bind up the broken heart, and wipe the tears of anguish from a sorrowful and longing world. And' wherever his spirit has fallen there has been an earnest endeavour to ameliorate the conditions of life ; and, with what may seem a curious contradiction, men have felt that they were doing their divinest work in removing the ills which lay in the very path of Divine providence. But while frankly admitting the existence of physical conditions which it is desirable to improve, we are not to rush into pessimism, and look upon the world as one unbroken scene of irremediable misery. This is the result of a morbid sympathy, unbalanced by the joyousness of trust. We may feel that there is a mystery in pain which we cannot pretend to solve. But, nevertheless, the signs of benevolent purpose so superabound, and the revelations of the Divine love in

our hearts are so distinct, that we cannot but trust in righteousness and goodness as the central and pervasive power of the universe. Perhaps with higher intelligence and wider knowledge we may understand what now perplexes us ; but meanwhile, in our childish ignorance, seeing but a little speck in the countless multitude of worlds, and having had but a moment's experience in the measureless eternity, we must trust Him who sees the end from the beginning, and weaves the vast tissue of events with the resources of infinite wisdom. Thus we may stand before the ills of earth, fully conscious that there is a kingdom which we have to conquer, and yet without feverish impatience or agonized revolt against the established order. Even on these woes we may look from a serene height, and go to meet them with the calm confidence of victors. It is thus that Christ consoles, not through noise or excitement or anxiety, but through the victory of faith,—faith which is quiet and majestic because it dwells amid eternal things, and sees the sorrows of earth losing themselves in the ultimate purpose of holy love. And so he diffuses an atmosphere of peace, which quiets the fretful nerve and stills the wild beatings of the heart. If we would be genuine consolers, we must receive here too his legacy of peace ; and while we seek to make our world a happier place, we must not allow our serenity to be overclouded by dark visions of ills we cannot cure, but labour, where God opens for us the door of opportunity, with that strong gentleness which comes from love and trust.

The case of our own troubles is, generally speaking, less difficult ; for we can recognize in them a moral end, and see that we are placed amid a scene suited to the development of character. There are, I know, exceptions when, like Job, we cannot at all unravel the purpose of our suffering ; but it is then that trust rises to its grandest exercise, and the mind may be full of peace, though the body is in anguish. How often have we seen this blessed power in others, the peace of Christ soothing the weary years of hopeless pain, and irradiating the sunken eyes with the light of immortal

hope. But these are exceptional cases; and it is not to trials on the heroic scale that I now refer. How much are we perturbed by little frets and worries, which we should be ashamed to speak of to a stranger, knowing that they are nothing but trifling jars against our own selfishness; and alas! how much unhappiness do even good men cause to others by an impatient and exacting temper, which has intrenched itself in the mind, and seems too insignificant to require a formal moral siege. Yet he that is unfaithful in the least is unfaithful also in much, and the peace of Christ does not disdain these lowly cares which checker our earthly lot. When the mind is stayed on God, and lives habitually amid eternal things, it surveys these little vexations in their true proportion, and they die away like spent ripples in a tranquil sea. This is the secret of Christian peace, of that sweet and tender charm which some of the old painters have conveyed into their representations of medieval saints, and which we sometimes meet in the living face of one whose presence is as the presence of an angel.

Such, then, in a few of its applications, is the peace which Christ has bequeathed to those who are his. Not as the world gives, gives he unto us. The world has its prizes and distinctions; and these, if they come while we are pursuing our duty, may have their advantages so long as we use them as means and not as ends. But if we make the world's gifts the ruling object of our lives, they will only bring a deeper dissatisfaction the more they accumulate. For where our treasure is, there will our heart be also, and it will be set upon things which are subject to all the accidents of time, and which in a few years must cease to be ours. Envy, anxiety, and greed are evil gifts, and they are poorly compensated by a brief uncertain period of unsubstantial glitter. The vanity of human wishes has been a theme for satire; and the transient world can never satisfy the deep desires of an immortal soul. But the peace of Christ carries us into the eternal realm; and the more the world unclasp its hold on our affections the more profound and calm does our inward rest become. And then, by a strange alchemy, the world



is transmuted ; and new heavens and a new earth, full of the glory of God, reveal themselves to our enraptured sight. We have renounced all things, and lo ! all things are ours. The beauty of God glows in earth and sky ; and adoration and trust and love take possession of our vanquished hearts. May that peace, the precious gift of Divine grace, come to us, and abide with us for ever.

*Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν.*

(Peace I leave with you.)

O Patience, angel meek,  
Come, build a holy shrine  
Within my troubled heart and fevered will;  
Enthroned there peace Divine.

Oh ! calmness and content  
Of him who rests in God,  
Who welcomes all that mortifies the self,  
And walks where Jesus trod.

Our Father's will is best ;  
Why do we fret and fume ?  
Oh ! let me rest in that all-righteous will,  
And ne'er to doubt presume.

#### REST IN THE SUPREMACY OF GOD.

Jesus said, 'The Father is greater than I.' Let us endeavour to enter into the sentiment of these words.

The scene, we must remember, is laid in that upper chamber where Jesus had just partaken of the last supper with his disciples. Judas, intent on mischief, had sullenly separated himself from their company. The remaining Apostles were filled with sorrow and apprehension, being

at last convinced that their Master was in extreme peril, and that he might soon be parted from them. Jesus himself, had it not been for the power of his faith, must have been full of disappointment and sad forebodings. His endeavour to lift his countrymen to a higher level of spiritual life and worship had, to all appearance, failed. He might have been tempted to exclaim with the prophet of old, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought.' Yet he was full of a sacred joy, which he sought to impart to his followers. 'Let not your heart be troubled,' he said, 'neither let it be fearful.' And what was the secret source of his confidence and peace? Simply his faith that he was in the hands of a Greater than himself, even the Father to whom he was going, who would not allow the bonds of spiritual love between himself and his disciples to be severed, who would send the Spirit of Truth to abide with them, and would not suffer his cause to perish. And so, though the wrench must be painful, and sorrow for a season must fill their hearts, yet all must be well, for these things were directed by a higher than human wisdom, and a deeper than human love. He may have thought within himself, 'My judgment would have decided otherwise, my will would have kept me here to complete the work which I had begun, and the keen blood of youth shrinks from what to my earthly sight seems such a mournful eclipse; but the Father is greater than I; he knows what is best; to his will I bow; and in quitting these mortal scenes I shall go with joy to him; and even now his strength descends upon me, I feel his peace within, and have overcome the world.'

It appears, then, that the words attributed to Jesus are the expression of a sublime trust, and such as every man would do well to bear about in his heart and to repeat to himself as he treads the daily round of duty or meets the sorrows and disappointments which the world is sure to bring. Let us view in some of its applications the faith which underlies them.

All who set before themselves a high and unselfish aim

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in life are sure to meet with clouds and storms in their endeavour to realize it. Great leaders of men have often been despised and rejected by their own generation, and have fallen before the insulting forces of evil. But we need not resort to the great examples which history affords: this mystery of providence enters the life of ordinary men. The revelations of the Spirit are far beyond our achievement; our best constructed plans are often doomed to failure; our influence for good seems to be infinitesimal in the mighty drift of events, and sometimes even our most earnest attempt to do good seems at the time only to rouse a tornado of evil; nay, even our strife with ourselves is carried on amid agonies of defeat, and the evil which we thought we had subdued springs up, and laughs us to scorn. How shall we meet these disappointments, and possess our souls in patience, while hopes lie withered on our path, and even aspiration droops her tired wing? Simply by the faith that the Father is greater than we. Before this all tumult dies away. Every good cause in which we can engage is his, not ours. He can bring victory out of defeat, and will fulfil his great purposes in the time which he deems best. Having done our duty, we may, with perfect peace of mind, leave all to him who is greater, wiser, more loving than we. Only we must not allow this thought to slacken our efforts. We have a part, however humble, assigned to us in the progress of the world; and we ought to play that part all the more strenuously when we reflect that the results are in the hand of God, and no sincere dedication of ourselves to his will can ever miss its appointed end. Alike for earnestness of work, and for sweet content under seeming failure, we can have no more potent talisman than the thought that the Father is greater than we.

We may extend this line of reflexion to the whole problem of pain. Here we can only trust, resting in the intimations of the Spirit that all must be well, that pain answers some deep purpose in the administration of the world, and that, if we could see all, we should choose each pang as needful for our own or another's good. The Power which made

this vast universe is greater than we, and, if greater, then wiser and better; for the wisdom and love which he plants within the mind are the greatest things we know, and are the revealing of that Spirit which lies at the heart of creation. And so, amid the anguish of the world we may rest assured that our own sympathy is but an inflowing rill from the infinite love of God; and when we ourselves are called upon to endure pain, the one source of patience is found in the thought that the Father is greater than we, and knows what it is best for us to suffer. His will, not ours, be done.

The same principle of faith comes to our rescue in every time of temptation. The temptations of men vary in their nature, according to character and circumstances; but every man has his temptations to certain acts which he knows to be wrong, and sometimes the temptation is very pressing, and the struggle against it severe and dubious. Then where shall we find such strength as in the reflection that One greater than ourselves appoints the trials of our virtue, and that the voice which calls us to a brave resistance is the voice of One who is higher than we? We know that, if we yield, our hearts will condemn us, and that sentence of condemnation will but echo the verdict of One who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things. Subdued by these meditations we can lift our hands in prayer, to clasp the hand which is held out to deliver us, and so we conquer in a strength mightier than our own. But we ought not to wait till the hour of trial comes; for we may be surprised and overthrown while we walk with careless confidence in our own security. We should go to every task and to every pleasure with this thought in our hearts, that the Father is greater than we, and therefore with the resolution to follow his will, not our own, and to do all things with the simplicity and purity of a child's faith; and then we shall not be taken unawares, and vanquished in a moment of weakness; for to those who have no might he increases strength, if they put their trust in him.

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This reminds us that besides the specific temptations which assail one after this manner, and another after that, there is the universal temptation to live below our own highest. We all have, in our various degrees, 'visions and revelations of the Lord,' glimpses of a Divine life, serene in its own completeness, resting in trustful calm above the storms of earth and self, a life sublime and strong in the infinite Power which enfolds us all, and dwells in the surrendered soul. But how often does our insight reach far beyond that victorious faith which enables us to grasp its visions, and to turn our stray ideals into the steadfast companions of our way. We walk along the level road, and try to be content because we are no worse than others; but God has shown us what is good, and we cannot help ever and anon lifting our drooping eyes to the mountain peaks, and feeling within us the stirrings of a Spirit greater than the spirit of the world. Ah! we are not alone, for the Father is with us, and these intimations of diviner life and a holier atmosphere are his own pleadings with us to seek a nobler course, and, instead of following the crowd, commit ourselves to his sure guidance. And then, if with heart-enkindling faith we can feel that the Father is greater than we, that it is not for us to choose but to follow, we shall begin to display some of the features of the life of God within the soul, and with a reverent humility to rise above the world. Yes, this is the great privilege and prerogative of man, to live in conscious communion with One who is greater than himself, and hence to pursue ideal ends, and through self-dedication to work that higher Will to which inferior creatures conform through their appointed instincts. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.

There are also times of doubt when the same thought may be our refuge. Probably few people who really think, and enter with clear apprehension into the knowledge of our time, have altogether escaped the sense of spiritual bereavement, and never longed for the time when they could see the realities of God face to face, and no longer

through the dim reflections of a clouded mirror. But in the most troubled moments of unanswered questionings we must rest in the clear thought that the Power which built this vast and goodly universe must be greater than we. For what does this imply? The thought of man, which measures the heavens and weighs the planets, even though it should flicker but for a moment amid the unconscious darkness of their immense duration, is greater than they, and cannot be the offspring of a blind material fate. There must, therefore, be a pervasive Reason, of which our reason is but a tiny beam, a boundless righteousness and love, of which our highest goodness and affection are but radiant points. Were it not so, we should stand supreme as gods amid the stupendous scene around us, and, even while its huge bulk crushed us into nonentity again, we should feel that we, in our open-eyed and intelligent weakness, were greater than its aimless and ignorant strength. But the moment we look within we become aware that there is One who is greater than we, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; for our powers, in all directions, run up into infinitude, and feel themselves to be only partial expressions of an abiding Reality that far transcends them, and to be the subjects of an ideal law possessing a universal and eternal authority. And now, if we can add Christ's faith that this mysterious, enfolding Power is the Father, dwelling in intimate communion with our souls, and holding converse with us along our daily path, we can rest in peace amid our intellectual limitations and perplexities, and wait patiently for the further kindling of his light. The Father is greater than we, and he will make his revelations at the best time, and in his own chosen way.

But there is another kind of doubt, which does not spring from intellectual difficulties, which indeed coexists with intellectual convictions, and arises from a temporary somnolence of the spirit, when the fires of devotion burn low, when the sense of Divine communion loses its vitality, and spiritual things seem like the shadowy and

elusive forms of dreamland. In these seasons also we must acquiesce. For some wise purpose we have our various measures of faith ; and it is one of the laws of our spiritual life that there should be alternations between times of revealing on the mount of vision and times of action on the dusky plains below, so that we may prove by patient well-doing our faithfulness to the higher inspiration. We should be already in heaven if the presence of God were always clear, and we were always rapt in holy contemplation ; but before we can reach this high fruition of our hopes, and lose in adoration all sense of weariness and effort, our characters must be trained, and we must learn to be steadfast when the fervour of emotion dies down, and it seems as though God had travelled into a far country, leaving us in our own chill and gloom. It is ours to do his holy will, not for our own sakes, not even for the joy of a blessed communion, but in the simplicity of love and duty, asking nothing for ourselves. The Father is greater than we, and knows best when to grant and when to withhold the light of his countenance ; only we must rest assured that to the soul which is true he will always give the faith which is needed for the occasion, and, even if he hide himself, will supply a secret strength and guidance while we walk through the darkest valley.

Thus, through the varied discipline of life, this clear utterance of the heart's trust may be a source of comfort and peace. To the intellect it may seem very needless to assert so obvious a proposition as that God is superior to man ; but to bear this truth always in the heart, and to make it a practical force in the work and the trials of every day, is not so easy. The simplest and most certain truths are precisely those which our self-will is the least ready to receive ; and we chafe and fret because our desires are crossed and our plans baffled. But he who carries in the hidden chambers of the soul the abiding thought that 'the Father is greater than I' is full of sweet content, and has learned the secret of eternal peace.

Οὐκ ἀφήσω ὑμᾶς ὀρφανούς, ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς. Ἀγαπήσω αὐτὸν  
καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμαυτόν.

(I will not leave you orphaned ; I come to you. I will love him,  
and manifest myself to him.)

O spirit pure, arrayed in robes of white,  
Thou kneelest now where seraphim adore ;  
Deep things of God engage thy wondering sight ;  
Thou 'rt passed from death to life for ever more.

And I, beneath, behold thee from afar,  
And scarce can dare thy blessedness to see.  
Thou shinest as a solitary star ;  
But sin divides my weary soul from thee.

And I look up in grief from shades below,  
With deep regrets for my imperfect life :  
But oh ! my soul is glad that thou dost know  
The home of peace, secure from sin and strife.

For I have loved thee, and must ever love,  
Though words and deeds too oft have faithless been ;  
And still I dream of angels' bliss above,  
And paint in thought the blessedness unseen.

And yet, in speaking thus, I wrong the grace  
That views our frailties with forgiveness still ;  
For love, though stooping low, can ne'er debase  
The beauteous image of God's holy will,

But passing through the haunts of grief and shame,  
And seeking those who wandered far astray,  
It shows the more its purity aflame  
With splendour from God's own unclouded day.

And so, O sovereign Love, from highest sphere  
Thou comest down to clasp me to thy breast ;  
And I with wondering eyes behold thee here,  
In all thy grace a child of God confessed.



In trust we worship side by side once more,  
Forgiving and forgiv'n. And now my heart  
Will, through thy love, in lowly triumph soar  
To those blest realms where we shall never part.

### THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

THE figure of the vine and the branches suggests to our minds the grandest ideal of the Christian Church. According to this ideal the community of Christ's disciples is not to resemble a machine, in which the various parts, possessing no life or will of their own, are adapted to one another by external arrangement, and are blindly subservient to an end determined by an intelligence in which they are incapable of sharing. Rather is it to be a living organism, growing in conformity with an inward law, and animated by a pervasive spirit, in which the most remote members consciously participate. An organism, however, no less than a machine, requires a subordination of parts, and the fulfilment of various functions. Some portions will be more communicative, others more receptive; and the supreme energy or sovereign principle which inspires the whole will find in some commanding organ its noblest and clearest expression. Christians of every school gratefully recognize in Christ this highest expression of the divinely human life which constitutes the Christian ideal. He is, as it were, the parent stem which strikes its roots down into the hiding-places of Divine power, and, drawing thence the vital sap, distributes it to the most distant branches.

We must observe that in this comparison Christ is not represented as the original source of life, nor is he separated in nature from those to whom his life was to be imparted. The vine and its branches constitute a single organism, in which the minutest tendril has its modest share of that

common nature which makes the whole a vine instead of an olive or a fig-tree. Greater than the entire plant is the husbandman, through whose fostering care it was originally deposited in a fertile soil, and has been trained and pruned so as to produce the richest fruit.

Hence we easily gather Christ's conception of what he was to accomplish in the world. He was to be the submissive organ of the Divine Life, the temple of the eternal Spirit, and, winning others to himself by the fascination of a Love higher than that of earth, to make them participants in the same heavenly mind. The life was to flow on from soul to soul, till the clinging stains of error and sin were washed away, and through this baptism of the Holy Spirit all became conscious that they were sons of God. The same plan must be followed by the Church. Only as the organ of the Divine Life can it communicate life. Apart from Christ it can do nothing; and, as history has too often proved, when it has honoured him with a lip-service, while its heart was far from him, it has sunk into worldliness, selfishness, and cruelty, and become the destroyer rather than the Saviour of men. Souls can be kindled only by soul; and it is when we are brought under the influence of one whose hopes and aims are above the world, and whose face is lighted by the beauty of holiness, that our hearts begin to tremble and glow with the heavenly flame. The Church or the man who would carry on the work of Christ must be a living branch in that vine which our Father has planted, and gladly lose the life of self in order to find the Life of God.

Let it not be supposed that this view would generate a servile and unintelligent imitation, or interfere with the free development of the soul. So long as we remain outside another mind, gazing with unappreciative awe upon the vastness of its powers, we are tempted to become feeble copyists, or perhaps to think that we are out of all relation with it; but the moment we pass sympathetically within it, it becomes an inspiration, wakens our own faculties into conscious life, and emancipates while it enlarges. If a

man be drawn to Christ by the love of a heart which has felt his true power, and looked into the deep places of his spirit, into him that spirit will enter as the harbinger of freedom, bearing with it the secret of highest living, purifying every faculty from the dross of self, and transfusing the soul with that ethereal radiance in which the false judgments of earth melt away like spectres of the night.

So too a Church which can see in Christ only an outward authority or an agent for bringing about an external salvation, but has no insight into the thoughts and affections by which his life was governed, may obey his supposed commands with a mechanical subserviency which defeats the very end which he had in view. But a Church which simply abandons itself to the pure admiration and love which his character awakens, and acknowledges that inward authority which rightfully belongs to a soul of such transcendent goodness and power, will feel his mighty influence as a throb of life, discern the secret force which sustained and guided him, and become itself the home of a revealing and quickening energy in the midst of men. It will stand before the world as a permanent embodiment of that Life, which, derived from God, moved with such simple love among the villagers of Galilee, and reached its glorious consummation on the cross; and because it is an organism, with internal forces of its own, it will be able to vary its action according to circumstances, and freely adapt itself to the needs of a changing civilization. On nothing but what is sinful will it lay a coercive hand. It will be friendly to every legitimate human interest, raising the whole of life to a higher level, giving it a richer and larger meaning, and causing men's various pursuits to spring from purer motives and move towards grander ends.

We may notice more particularly one or two characteristics of that Spirit which, having attained its clearest revelation in Christ, ought to pervade the entire ecclesiastical organism.

The Christian life is fundamentally one of humble and loving dependence upon God. As the vine requires the

constant care of the husbandman, so the soul which would live divinely must commit itself in perfect trust to him who alone can make it fruitful of good. We have already observed how this dependence characterized the life of Christ. It was his meat to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work; and with unfaltering trust he followed the Divine intimations in his soul until through the agony of the cross his faith was lost in sight. The disciple too, called as he is to share the Master's life, must have this filial submission and communion. Only through the surrender of self can he become the vehicle of higher influences. He must feel that of himself he can do nothing, so that in the consciousness of mortal weakness he may find a higher than earthly strength. He must always follow his noblest vision, and listen to the word within his conscience as a voice from the eternal realm. And so it may be at last, through the grace of God, that the supreme beauty of holiness, truth, and love will tabernacle within him, and make him, in the lowliness of his consecration, a centre of far-reaching and elevating power.

Hence we see the necessity of prayer for the Christian life; for prayer is essentially an escape from the life of self into the life of God. It is, as it were, the root by which we attach ourselves to the eternal ground on which all things rest, and draw the needed nourishment from its infinite fulness. It is possible, no doubt, to address God with selfish and arrogant petitions, and boast that our prayers are answered when we fancy that the Divine will has succumbed to ours. Such petitions do not raise or bless the soul. True prayer is a dedication of the desires, a listening rather than a dictating, a humble, receptive attitude of mind, an aspiration to rise from the turmoil of our selfish cravings into the peace of God; and it is answered when the celestial flame comes down and consumes the sacrifice of our self-will. Without it the soul begins to droop and pine, and sinks down into the worldly life; with prayer it grows in breadth and power, and in owning its dependence attains to the freedom of a son.

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For the life of dependence upon God is a life of independence of man; not indeed the independence of a self-contained and unsympathizing isolation, but that which enables us to choose and maintain the part which we believe to be right. We may notice this feature of the Christian character in two of its aspects.

The Christian is one who has overcome the world; yet he neither lifts himself with a proud sense of superiority above it, nor does he withdraw from it in fear of its contamination. While deriving the spirit of his life from a higher source, he feels a profound interest in everything human, and owns the pathos of men's errors, follies, and even sins. He traces the broken lines of a Divine order in the institutions of society and the various pursuits of business, has a ready smile for every innocent enjoyment, and mingles earnestly in the work of the reformer and the philanthropist. The sins of those in high places are more odious to him than the failings of the poor and uninstructed; nor does he fear to denounce national wickedness, or to uphold the rule of justice as the sovereign guide for governments as well as individuals. Loving all, and ready to yield every selfish claim, renouncing the poor ambitions of this mortal life, and content to be nothing if only he may speak and act for God, he maintains his own freedom of action and conviction with a modest and gentle determination which the worldly man, with his imperious ways and his cynical estimate of others, can neither understand nor overcome. Knowing what is in man, and containing in the conquered world within him the key by which to unlock the meaning of the great world without, he moves amid all human engagements, a source of strength to the tempted, a silent rebuke to the guilty, commanding respect by his lofty but simple righteousness, winning the heart by his sympathizing love, amid the conflict and meanness of earth a spirit of purity and peace.

In the Church too we must maintain our independence. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' This liberty is not a mere rebellion against authority, an arrogant

wish to assert our own pretensions, or a disowning of our indebtedness to others; it is simply a transference of our allegiance from the lower to the higher. Every branch in the Christian vine has the witness of its own interior life, and can bear no other fruit than that which grows from its own germinating power. He to whom the life of communion with God is in any degree a reality, while humbly admitting the dimness and uncertainty that are caused by his own imperfection, must nevertheless regard the voice of conscience as more awful and divine than the decree of the most venerable Church, and must avow as his sacred conviction that which, after earnest and prayerful investigation is borne in upon his mind as true. Our opinions may be often erroneous, and are always limited; but so long as we form them with guileless love of truth, they contain some gleam of light amid the darkness, and beacon us on to a nearer vision. It were treachery to deny the holiest word that God puts in our hearts, and no true Church of Christ will ask us to keep it silent. Yet this is not saying that we can dispense with human aid. We must not cut ourselves off from the vine which has spread its branches over so many lands, and survived so many storms, but rather seek to be filled with its richest life, and made productive of its choicest fruits. We must pray that we may enshrine the heavenly Spirit that dwelt in Christ, and be roused to a pure enthusiasm by the lofty strain of Christian devotion that sounds through the ages; but for this very reason we must be free, that every faculty may be brought with unimpaired resources to the high task, and that the trumpet call of truth may never be exchanged for the feeble whining of a shibboleth. The letter killeth; the Spirit only giveth life.

But in claiming freedom for ourselves we must respect the freedom of others. Religious earnestness is apt to be intolerant, and while insisting on its own right to hold the truth denies the right of its fellow to maintain a seeming error; and it is sometimes said that a comprehensive charity is inconsistent with force of conviction. It is

indeed inconsistent with the narrow and ignorant zeal which 'imagines that it possesses the whole truth and nothing but the truth ;' but it is quite compatible with a profound faith in the reality of Divine things. Those who have real spiritual discernment are aware of the limitations of their own vision, and, while grateful for what they see, still long for a glory to be revealed. We gaze at the sun of truth through the refracting medium of biassed and immature minds ; and while one sees the burning red, and flings the glow of his passionate remorse and strife and triumph over the whole of his theology, another discerns only the cooler green, and tones down his creed to suit the quiet verdure of an earthly home, and a third beholds the blue, and raises his mystic glance into the undefined reaches of the all-embracing sky. Doubtless, too, there are rays of Divine truth that lie wholly beyond our present capacity of vision ; and only the full harmonious soul that is to be shall gaze upon the clear white beam in which our ' broken lights ' shall find their unity at last. Instead, then, of condemning one another, we ought to be a mutual help ; for to each the Spirit is given by measure, and not within the limits of any school can we discern the fulness of Christ. That fulness is not yet exhausted, and we may look in trust and hope for new developments. There are many branches, though but one vine ; and we may at once reverence the ancient boughs, which have borne their more or less perfect fruit, and gladly mark the appearance of new shoots, which prove an unimpaired vitality. Thus we return to the thought with which we started. The Church, however divided by artificial separations, is a vast living organism, branching out in various directions, discharging diverse functions, but informed by a common life, and slowly growing towards a Divine perfection. Oh ! that it may become conscious of the unity of the Spirit, and, casting away all that obstructs that Spirit's inward working, may attain at last its ideal grace and power, and be filled with the life of God.

O Church of God, I sigh for thee.  
 In the chill wilderness alone I stray.  
 My dream is past, and in the waking day  
 The dull, hard forms I see  
 Which, in my fever'd sleep, with touch divine  
 Transfigured seem'd, creations pure of thine,  
 O wondrous Church of God.

No more unguided would I roam,  
 Choose my own way, and with presumptuous mind  
 Honour myself as leader of the blind.  
 Receive thy wanderer home.  
 Accept the will resigned, the sorrowing heart,  
 And give me strength to choose the better part,  
 O healing Church of God.

I need thy calming voice to say,  
 In tones articulate, what means that word  
 Which in my soul I oft have faintly heard,  
 Like music far away.  
 I need thy altar's glow to clear the light  
 That inly gleams upon my misty sight,  
 O glorious Church of God.

Stained with the blot of worldly aims  
 I'd bathe me in thy cleansing sea of life,  
 And rise new-born, above the soiling strife  
 Of passion's selfish claims.  
 Then in thy temple may the Spirit's fire  
 This trembling heart with martyr strength inspire,  
 O quick'ning Church of God.

Breathe fresh'ning gales upon my mind,  
 And in thy wide communion set me free,  
 That I enlarged may grow, and first in thee  
 Th' ideal self may find,  
 The limits dim of partial life forsake,  
 And to the fulness of my Lord awake,  
 O catholic Church of God.



## THE ELECTION OF LOVE.

IN the Synoptical Gospels the commandments to love God and to love one's neighbour are selected as expressing the essential principles of the law. These were very old commandments. But John represents as 'new' Christ's commandment to love one another.<sup>1</sup> He qualifies it, however, by the addition 'as I loved you.' It is in this that its newness consists. Love is not a fixed quantity, but may range from a feeble and prejudiced liking up to the infinite and impartial love of God. In the fifteenth chapter love is insisted on as the substance of the Christian's life. Christ was conscious of the Father's love, claiming him for itself; and to the consciousness of this love his heart responded, so that he kept the Father's commandments with the free devotion of a son, and 'remained' in his love. Similarly Christ loved the disciples, and wakened in them an answering love. This love was felt to be a new principle of life, marking off, through the seal of a saintly fellowship, the little Christian communities from the greed and selfishness of the world around them. It was a love which could make friendship's last and most precious offering, life itself, for the beloved. This old commandment is still new, the untarnished chain of gold which binds earth to heaven, and can never lose its charm, as fresh souls are drawn into the glad surprise of Divine communion, and the adoring consciousness of a love not their own flooding their hearts.

This communion with the inmost life of Christ makes us his friends, rendering not the mechanical obedience of a slave, but the abundant fruit of a quickened and devoted spirit. "From such he has no secrets." 'All things,' he said, 'which I heard from my Father I made known to you.' Nevertheless, we meet here the paradox which so often occurs in spiritual things. For, a little later, he says 'I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now,' and he refers his disciples to the future coming

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 34. And I John ii. 8, 10.

of the Spirit to lead them into 'all the truth.' How is this? His own soul was perfectly transparent. He did not shroud himself in mystery, and issue dark, oracular commands, which required a blind obedience, but openly uttered and explained all that he heard in the secret sanctuary of the heart. He did not wilfully keep anything back; and yet he may have felt that there was more to come, that there were dim intimations of further truth to be revealed, about which, if time were allowed for the inward voice to become more articulate, he would have many things to say. But, as it was, they were still beyond expression.

The need of the Spirit's teaching is further apparent from the limitations of the disciples. On the side of Christ there is perfect openness; but on ours there is an imperfect capacity of understanding. We may indeed have the Spirit of Christ, and yet it may have a fulness of meaning which is still beyond our comprehension. We are friends; but there may be depths in our friend's soul which we have not fathomed. Is it not so in all the deepest friendships? Those are shallow and have no abiding strength, where we seem to know our friend completely at the first meeting, and no light of wisdom or reserve of tenderness remains to be discovered. Those only are strong and permanent where there is still something to be known, and each successive year discloses some new feature. And this limitation of our knowledge implies no secrecy. There is the most candid openness on each side, and heart blends with heart in pure affection. But there is an element of infinity about a great soul; and though it is clear as the sunlight, yet, like a sunset glory, it is always new. And so with Christ; his Spirit may be always open, and winning us by its holy power, and yet we may have seen but a little way into the vast reaches of his Divine experience, and continually fresh splendours may dawn on our ascending souls. He has still many things to say to the world, and, if we have ears to hear, we may catch the sound of a glad message to our own generation. His Church has never

fully understood him ; often indeed has arrayed him in robes of mockery and crown of thorns ; and we still look for his spiritual coming.\* Even St. Paul, with his visions and revelations, counted not himself to have apprehended,; and with him we wait for a glory to be revealed.

The fact that we are drawn by cords of love to Christ, who opens before us a prospect reaching far beyond our present powers of vision, is indicated by the words, 'Ye did not choose me, but I chose you.' So it is with all great leaders of men. We do not come to them through a critical and selective judgment of our own, but are involuntarily attracted by their commanding power. We may recognize, but we do not choose, the born general, or statesman, or poet. By word or deed they exhibit their great qualities, and, touching our admiration, compel a spontaneous following. Chiefly in the case of the religious leader a spell is laid upon us, and we rise up and follow, being chosen and called by a power higher than our own. Thus it had been with the Evangelist. His young enthusiasm had been kindled by the new teacher, whose look and voice had constrained him to leave his father's nets, and to cast in his lot with a wandering prophet, not knowing yet whither he was bound. A life of heavenly beauty had captivated his heart ; and though he had still much to learn, he asked no more. It was enough that a wondrous love, reaching up to the throne of God, had found him, and called him to a holy service. That Jesus had loved him,—this was the humbling marvel and glory of his life.

Without some such experience there is no real discipleship. If we are mere critics, sifting evidences, and picking and choosing among the world's sages, and graciously bestowing upon them our approbation, we know nothing of the religious power of Christianity, and, while we loudly boast of our enlightenment, we sit in the dim lamplight of our own choice. This is one of the ways, too common at the present day, by which religion is lost in theology, and we miss the indwelling of Divine power while we give all our attention to things external. True discipleship is

the response to a call, an unbounded affection, and reverence, and trust, springing to meet the summons of a holy and commanding spirit. And when we have entered into the heart of him whom we revere, it matters not if in some things he was necessarily subject to the conditions of his time, and some of his thoughts and expectations have passed away. These things do not affect the interior life, or detract aught from the majesty of a soul aflame with the Spirit of God. And when the sifting process of the intellect has accomplished its needed work, and Christianity has passed through a period of chill and gloom, discipleship may return with renewed power, and Christ become the world's Redeemer in a higher and grander sense than theology has ever dreamed of yet. Here is the work that lies before us, to restore religion to its rightful throne, to make clear the voice of Christ's ideals calling us to the holy duties of a devoted friendship, and so kindling a living fire among the dying ashes of the past.

Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἣ ἐμὴ ἐν ὑμῖν ᾗ καὶ ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν  
πληρωθῇ.

Ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίβιν ἔχετε· ἀλλὰ θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν  
κόσμον.

(These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be in you.)

There is a soul-felt joy that still abides  
When earthly trials harass me,  
And, like an oft seen star, my spirit guides  
Secure across life's troubled sea.

The jealous world will tribulation fling  
On all who long for larger life;  
And he who soars aloft in faith must bring  
Stern weapons for the holy strife.

Through poignant anguish of the world's rough scorn,  
And persecution's angry frown,  
Through tear-dewed sorrow in the heart forlorn,  
The child of God must win his crown.

But far withdrawn, serene in hallowed deeps,  
Pure faith and love the thoughts employ;  
And calm within the breast, while sorrow weeps,  
There sings an everlasting joy.

The soul that heavenward flies on wings of prayer,  
Whose aims with God's blest will accord,  
Shall reign triumphant over grief and care,  
And feel the gladness of its Lord,

A deep, full flood of joy, that flows from springs  
Of waters of eternal life,  
And unto loyal souls salvation brings  
Amid the anguish of their strife.

### THE LONELINESS OF CHRIST.

THE loneliness of Christ has been often spoken of. He moved at a height which none other had reached. He was full of thoughts and feelings which the best but dimly understood. His mind was engrossed with a great purpose which his nearest friends could not appreciate, and too often totally misconceived. There was no human ear in which he could breathe his holiest aspirations, or utter the deepest convictions of his faith, and feel sure of a response. He seems like a solitary spirit living in a world not his own. Not that he was without the tender ministrations of affection or the zealous devotion of manly hearts; but he had no full and perfect sympathy, no friend who could read his soul, and enter into his most hidden emotions. His disciples appear sometimes to have followed him with a wistful awe, impressed by the grandeur of his determination, and seldom venturing to question its wisdom, but unable to detect its motive or its aim. And we feel that he was less

alone when at the midnight hour he bowed himself in prayer on the deserted mountains, than when he was surrounded by multitudes who listened with astonishment to his words, but seemed incapable of taking them home to their hearts.

It is conceivable, however, that he might not have felt oppressed by this loneliness. Is not a soul so lofty sufficient for itself? Is it not so absorbed in the contemplation of truth, or so resolved to carve out for itself some high destiny, that it has not the craving for sympathy which we associate with soft and powerless minds? Is it not the weak and dependent, not the manly and self-reliant, who thus lean on others for support? Undoubtedly this is often the case, and we might imagine Christ occupying an elevation far above the rest of mankind, and looking down with something akin to scorn on the mass of men, while he gloried in his own isolated supremacy. But when we remember that it is no mark of perfection to develop one side of our nature at the expense of another, and that he is more richly endowed who adds to his force and independence of character a winning tenderness and sympathy, we are not surprised to find that Christ, with all his original greatness which left him without a peer, yet found his loneliness a grief, and would fain have derived strength and comfort from the warm embrace of friendship. His own nature was singularly susceptible of sympathy. This is one of the secrets of his far-reaching influence. The cold and distant never captivate the affections or move the devout longings of others. But his heart trembled with love for men of every grade; and if they could not understand him, he understood them, and his words went down into the most secret depths of their souls. Surely a heart so considerate, and so sensitively alive to every phase of human thought and feeling, could not be itself indifferent to the endearments of friendship and the support of sympathy. In this indeed, as in other things, he must have known that it is more blessed to give than to receive; yet he must have felt that to receive is blessed too. To give away outward things without longing for a return is com-

paratively easy ; but to pour out one's very soul for the good of those who know not how to prize it, to love the loveless, and lavish sympathy where there is no response,—this can be accomplished only by those who rest in a higher than human love, and not even by them without a pang. We are prepared, then, to find in the recorded histories of Jesus some traces of his sense of loneliness. In the beautiful thanksgiving preserved by Matthew and Luke, he expresses this sense of loneliness in few but significant words, 'No one knows the Son, but the Father.' This was the price which he paid for his wonderful revelations, and that fulness of the Spirit which made him the Son of God ; they separated him from the apprehension of those around him, and God alone knew him. There is profound sadness in the words spoken in the last hours with his disciples, 'Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.' And when, in Gethsemane, he was prostrated in an agony of prayer, he still felt comforted by the nearness of loved friends. He went backwards and forwards to see if they were still watching with him. He was pained to see them sunk in the unconsciousness of slumber, but excused them in his own kind voice, 'The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.'

Yet he was not alone, because the Father was with him. He loved the sympathy of men, but he did not depend on it. He could pursue his solitary track, strong in the unfailing presence of God. There was One to whom every tear was known, to whom every holy resolve was precious, who sympathized to the uttermost with his child. He who had inspired those pure affections, those noble desires, that unconquerable love, was not himself afar off and shrouded in unapproachable solitude. His love rested on the world, and was round about every man, though he knew it not. He was a Father, whose will was holy, whose goodness and mercy knew no stain. Enemies might calumniate, and friends might misinterpret ; but the Father knew his child to the very centre of his being, and no breath of aspiration

could escape his loving regard. In betrayal, in agony, in death, he would be present, and relieve that dreadful sense of desertion. For a true Son of God there is no real loneliness.

Οὐκ εἰμὶ μόνος, ὅτι ὁ πατήρ μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐστίν.

(I am not alone, for the Father is with me.)

No, not alone, though lonely is my way,  
And none suspects the anguish of my soul ;  
For thou art here, my guardian and my stay,  
And canst my mortal weaknesses control.

No, not alone, for thou art with me still,  
And watchest o'er my life with ceaseless care.  
Thou, Father, dost my best desires fulfil,  
And save my loneliness from rash despair.

No, not alone, though earth must pass away,  
And all this goodly scene become as nought,  
Though heaven no more its starlit dome display,  
Nor years revolve, with priceless blessings fraught.

No, not alone, although my eyes, grown dark,  
May trace no more the smile of loving friends,  
Although no more my ears responsive mark  
How kindness to the voice such sweetness lends.

No, not alone, when through the lonely vale,  
Leaving the world, I go with silent tread ;  
For there, though terrors would my soul assail,  
Thou wilt keep watch, and dissipate my dread.

Oh ! dearer than the world's bewitching grace,  
Dearer than friendship's true and constant spell,  
Art thou, who speakest in the secret place,  
The heart's calm shrine, where thou dost ever dwell.

Into Christ's sense of loneliness, with its appropriate consolation, most men can enter more or less completely ;



for they have secrets in their lives which only God can know. Far as you may penetrate into the heart of your friend, do you not find at the centre a lonely shrine, which mortal eye may not explore? However two souls may profess to have no secrets from one another, are there not things which cannot be told, things too vast to be compressed within the limits of human speech, things too sad and shameful to be confessed to any but Him who already knows them? There is often an enduring sorrow, which stamps its impress into the character, but which none may know. There is an aspiration which burns like the sun at noon, but wears an exterior as pale and cold as clouds from which the sunset glory has fled. Behind the hard manner there is sometimes a love which has been crushed down with a strong hand, but never can forget. The calm and self-possessed, whose formal salute repels you, are not seldom full of passion on which is laid the heavy pressure of duty, or which has to be restrained lest it should gush forth in too vehement a flood. Yes, there are in most of us things better and things worse than others suspect; but God knows us altogether, and understands our thoughts afar off. Oh! it is well to feel that the Father is with us in the most solitary passages of our lives; for then our hearts, instead of becoming bitter, will find his grace sufficient for us, and that lonely central shrine, being full of him, will be a source of life and peace.

But besides this loneliness which seems to belong to us by the very constitution of our nature, there is a further loneliness which is often forced upon us by events. What a sense of solitude falls upon us when we see a beloved companion off upon a journey which must cause a long separation. As the train or the boat moves away it seems to bear with it the most precious portion of our lives, and to leave us to labour drily on without the encouraging voice, the cheering laugh, the judicious counsel. But even in such partings as these, partings which are often sadder than men care to acknowledge, we ought to remember that

God is with all alike, and is the eternal link between hearts separated only by distance. Though two friends should never meet again, yet they are folded in one Presence, and address their supplications to the same ear: and thus in spirit they are together, though miles of ocean roll between them.

There is, further, the loneliness of bereavement, a sorrow as ancient as the race. It may come with slow and stealthy pace, keeping us agitated between hope and fear, and leaving us ample time to prepare for the worst. But when it has come, and the chamber where we ministered so long is at last empty, who will say that the loneliness is less, and that the heart is less bruised because it has been slowly crushed? Bereavement may come too with sudden swoop, leaving us stunned, and unable to believe at once that we are indeed alone. Surely that dear form is only absent for awhile. Was not that the very voice, the step, that we know so well? Ah! it was only the beating of our own sad hearts; alone, alone. Yet is there not a Presence round about us? We are not alone. What is that which whispers, 'Fear not, for I am with thee'? He, the author of joy and sorrow, who gives and takes away, our Father, will watch us to the end; He cannot change or die. Blessed be his name, in the day of dreariest trial he seems nearest, as we notice the sunlight most when it breaks from behind a cloud. There is a saintly height of communion which can be reached only through sorrow. The cross marks the Christian's path to the skies; and in the profoundest shades of solitude we are nearest to the light of God.

May we not discover here the reason why the sense of loneliness is made to enter so largely into human life? We have been created for the infinite, and must be brought to feel that the finite never can satisfy our needs. God desires our hearts for himself, and we have not ascended to the true height of our manhood till we love Him with unwavering constancy and faith. To have faith in God is often spoken of as though it were only the beginning of

religion. It is indeed the beginning, but it is also the end. 'How few men have it in all its grandeur and strength. To believe at every moment that the Father is with us, that nothing can befall us without his loving disposal, that every pang is precisely suited to our needs, that our very doubts and perplexities are required for our spiritual progress, that his will is revealed in us when we steadfastly obey it, and that that will cannot change though all men should be false to the light within them,—this is an eminence which few occupy, and to lift men to which is the aim of all the ordinances of religion. Thus to rest in God, calm and unmoved in the discharge of duty, while the tide of events sweeps by, to feel that he is unalterably good, and that he is on our right hand when enemies oppose and friends drop beside us,—this is the crowning glory of a man. And how nobly the power of this faith is brought out by the stern discipline of loneliness. When does Christ's spirit appear so grand as when betrayed, deserted, captured like a felon, accused of blasphemy by those whose authority every Jew revered, he nevertheless felt that he was not alone, but the Father was with him, and even through the ignominy of the cross would make his cause triumphant? Loneliness brings out the whole strength of character, often reveals a man for the first time to himself, and shows that he may, nay must, pursue an independent course. It is not when life is smooth, and all men speak well of us, that we are compelled to draw upon whatever force is in us. Then we may deem ourselves brave, and be cowards at heart after all. But let human sympathy drop away, let the hearts on which we leaned cease to beat, let us drink some bitter cup of sorrow in which none can share, and then we shall know whether we are weak and faithless dependents on the world, or strong and steadfast soldiers of the cross. Then the soul will either sink down, unable to secure any eternal resting-place, or will rise up in its immortal majesty, and say, 'I am not alone, for the Father is with me.'

Alone with God, alone in prayer,  
Soft breathing in the midnight air.  
Come, O my Father, fill my soul;  
Expel my sin, and make me whole.

With penitential sigh for sin  
I cry from hallowed depths within,  
Where doth thy Spirit gently brood,  
And turns my peccant will to good.

For when I am alone with thee  
There is no loneliness to me;  
I meekly bow my head, and hear  
Thy voice which banishes my fear.

O voice of Love, speak clearly now;  
Inspire and sanctify my vow,  
That, by thy mercy kept from ill,  
I, in the world, may serve thee still.

### THE PARTING PRAYER.

THIS sublime prayer reaches such a lofty strain that we might well prefer kneeling in silent adoration to attempting any analysis of its structure or its thought. Still, while we yield ourselves to the spirit of the whole, there are some things which it may be of advantage to view in detail, and to impress on our heart and conscience. The prayer reveals the height and breadth of that communion which man may have with God, and which, as the Evangelist says in his Epistle, the Christian believer actually has with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The fundamental faith on which this communion rests is found in the consciousness of Jesus himself that he had been sent by God.

This idea recurs as a refrain throughout the prayer,<sup>1</sup> as indeed it does through the rest of the Gospel, where it is repeated no less than thirty-five times. Jesus felt that he was entrusted with a Divine message to deliver to the world. He spoke not from himself, not his own clever thoughts, suggested by intellectual pride or selfish ambition, but the truth which he had heard in the sanctuary within, where God reveals himself to the pure in heart. And so he expected all who were of God to recognize the words of God, all who had given any heed to the divinity within them to own the divinity of his teaching, and to welcome the light which made clear the dimly seen forms of truth which had floated in mist before the spiritual imagination. So it was, and still is. The soul imprisoned in dead creeds or fettered with selfish thoughts cannot hear his voice; but those who cry to God, and seek only the higher will, receive the words that come from heaven, and welcome the great teachers of truth and righteousness as angels who bring bread of life to the famished heart. So we do not rest in evidences which appeal to the senses and the intellect, and depend on a long chain of doubtful testimony. It is not flesh and blood that disclose these things, but only through the revelation of the Father do we exclaim, with Peter, 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.'

Accordingly, the confidence that Jesus was no self-elected adventurer, but one who had been sent by God, is represented as the degree of faith to which the disciples had attained. Jesus himself had the clear and direct intuition of the Father, and made known this Divine relationship to the disciples.<sup>2</sup> But its full meaning was still to be revealed in ever increasing knowledge, so that at last the Father's love should dwell in them, and Christ, with all the fulness of his insight and devotion, should abide in their hearts, and thus establish a spiritual unity, joining heaven and earth in the communion of the Spirit. For eternal life lay in this completeness of knowledge, a knowledge that penetrates the deep things of God, and

<sup>1</sup> Verses 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Verses 25, 26.

sees and understands the divine soul of a perfect Son of God. There are of course in God infinite mysteries which no human thought can ever fathom; and there are things which we may know about God, and which we may boastfully proclaim, while he himself is quite shut out by the hardness of our hearts. To know him is to see him with the immediate gaze of the spiritual eye, and to behold, as ever present and eternal realities, his righteousness and holiness and love. To know Christ is not to have information about the time and place where he lived on earth, and about his words and deeds, but to recognize, through this lower knowledge, the divine beauty of his soul, to discern the inward springs of his activity, and to understand the meaning and power of a human life in constant communion with God.

This knowledge, this eternal life flowing for ever from God into humble and receptive souls, is, as I have said, the bond of unity, drawing men into a holy brotherhood. This is Christ's own mark of his true disciples. When men love one another, all is well. Diverging thoughts, and diversity of operations, needed for the beauty and the progress of our race, cannot divide them. Worldly ambitions and selfish interests cannot disturb their peace. This unity of men whose life was consciously drawn from God was to constitute Christendom's appeal to the world. Men, beholding the Christian community, as it were a field of pure and shining gold amid the filth and corruption of the nations, would perceive that he who had wrought this great miracle in human hearts had indeed been sent of God, and borne a Divine message on his lips. This was, as we have seen, the beginning of faith, to be followed by a deeper knowledge; and so the life would spread, like a kindling flame, from heart to heart, till all peoples were drawn into the family of God, and the golden chain of love encompassed the world. How faithless Christendom has been to this grand ideal needs no words to describe. It is a subject that might draw tears from eyes of stone.

Christ's consciousness of having been sent, and the

corresponding belief of the disciples that he had been sent by God, involved the recognition of all his high endowments as gifts. The disciples had come to know that all the things in him which moved their wonder and love were from God.<sup>1</sup> This Divine giving is one of the notes of the Gospel. The life which animated him who had been sent, the Spirit dwelling in him without measure, the glory of his character, his authority, his true judgment, the works which he had to accomplish, the words which he felt impelled to speak, all were gifts; and the cup of suffering which he had to drink, that too was given; he could do nothing of himself, and claimed nothing as his own, but yielded himself up to be the pure organ of the Father's will.

This sense of dependence is further expressed in the opening words of the prayer,—‘Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee.’ Christ was to glorify God by the manner of his death; how completely he succeeded history testifies. But not without the strength that comes in prayer could he meet this last trial of his faith. We cannot truly glorify God unless the Divine glory first comes to abide in us. We can offer to God only that which God has bestowed, and the halo round the heads of saints and martyrs is not the shining of their own light, but heavenly rays making luminous the earthly mists. The august solemnity of this prayer must not hinder us from its use. As children of God we have to glorify him through our daily work and pleasures and trials, and the substance of our morning prayer should be ‘Glorify thy child, that thy child may glorify thee.’ With unveiled face we must look upon the glory of God, and in the splendour of its radiance be changed into the same image from glory to glory. Only then can we rise with Christ above the vain and transient shows of the world, and lose our perishing and earthly life in the eternal life of God.

How wonderful the result of this perfect dependence. As soon as we can say with the self-surrender of sincere

<sup>1</sup> Verse 7.

love, 'All mine are thine,' we feel with a glow of devout gratitude, 'All thine are mine.' St. Paul writes to the Corinthian disciples, 'All things are yours.'<sup>1</sup> They were blind to this Divine gift; and through narrow and selfish aims, boasting in this man or in that, they forgot the boundless wealth which was offered to the receptive soul. That alone is truly ours which brings some contribution to our life, some truer thought, or purer feeling, or nobler aspiration, some more penetrating perception of beauty and harmony and love. The wealth which we call our own, and which contracts our sympathies, and makes us assume grand airs towards our fellow-men because we live in larger houses and wear finer clothes, really owns us, and not we it; and any one of simpler and clearer insight, who sees in our reputed possessions a beauty which we have never beheld, and hears a Divine voice in its rustling leaves and falling waters, owns it in the highest sense, and feels that it is a gift of God, living and tremulous with Divine power and benediction. Yes, while we blindly grope in the mud, seeking for some small and perishable glitter, a universe invites us. To the soul that adores and loves God the universe belongs, for it is full of angels bearing eternal riches to the ravished heart. Who that has bowed in rapture before the wonder and glory of nature, and been filled with joy by the music of her thousand voices, would cast from him this Divine vision, and stop his ears against these celestial harmonies, for all that a foolish world could offer to be called his own? How vain are our longings and complainings and desire of wealth, when the riches of God are beneath our feet, and above our heads, and around us on every side, and within us are gifts and faculties which enable us to enter as worshippers into this wonderful temple of the Eternal. 'All thine are mine,' and their glory fills me, till world within answers to world without, and every selfish care is lost in beauty and peace and love.

In these reflections we see how the disciples belong to the same spiritual realm as Christ. This is again and

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. iii. 21.



again made explicit throughout the prayer.<sup>6</sup> 'Thou didst love them as thou didst love me';<sup>1</sup> 'They are not of the world, as I am not of the world';<sup>2</sup> 'As thou didst send me into the world I also sent them into the world';<sup>3</sup> 'I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated.'<sup>4</sup> 'The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them.'<sup>5</sup> These words resume the truth taught under the figure of the vine and the branches. All who share the same Divine life, in whatever age and clime, are one brotherhood, and are drawn together by a natural and holy attraction, which the blind ferocity of the bigot has too long succeeded in thwarting. But a brighter day is slowly dawning on the world; and this long-neglected truth of the gospel is stealing, still indeed with faint illumination, all round the earth, and, in spite of the dark clouds which hang over the nations, the light will spread, till Christ is truly glorified, and his Spirit reigns over a redeemed world.

*Ἡγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας.*

(Thou didst love them as thou didst love me.)

O Love, O boundless Love, in thee I rest.  
In thy deep sea I drown my sins and fears.  
Father, in thee I am for ever blest;  
Taught by the past, I trust the future years.

I cannot see behind the clouds that hide  
The land unknown which woos the longing soul;  
But things unseen eternally abide,  
And, felt within, my wayward steps control.

And when this earthly mansion is decayed,  
We have a building reared by God's own hand;  
And though in dust this mortal part is laid,  
The soul ascends to join th' angelic band.

<sup>1</sup> Verse 23.

<sup>2</sup> Verses 14, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Verse 18.

<sup>4</sup> Verse 19.

<sup>5</sup> Verse 22.

We wait the vision of that orient day  
When eyes, awaking from the dream of earth,  
Shall gaze in rapture on the living ray  
That gilds the cloudless dawn of heavenly birth.

## THE PARTING.

THE mock trial and the crucifixion are over. 'It is finished,'—the grand tragedy of Golgotha. He is gone; but the obscure victim, who appeared to sink without a ripple in the ocean of imperial heathenism, is honoured where the Roman eagles never spread their exulting pinions, and the proud empire whose Procurator basely yielded to the clamours of religious hate, has delivered up the sceptre to powers more vital than its own, while Christ's dominion still claims the world for righteousness, and creates the unity of a spiritual sway in hearts divided by country and speech and government.

He had passed from earthly sight, his mortal life quenched by the truculence of a blind fanaticism. For a time the disciples were in despair; for their fondest hopes seemed blighted, and the anticipated splendours of Messianic triumph had set in the darkness of the tomb. But even in Jerusalem, while the horrors of the closing scene were still fresh, the truth of his undying power in the thoughts and lives of men was revealed to them with startling clearness; and when they were once more amidst the old familiar sights, and sadly plied their craft upon the Galilean Lake, they saw him as of yore, yet knew him now as an immortal spirit, raised far above the reach of principalities and powers; and his voice in their hearts sent them forth to attempt the conquest of the world with the weapons of faith and love. And chiefly to Peter came the familiar tones, reminding him, by the gentlest of

appeals, of his momentary failure, and strengthening him with an unconquerable resolution to tend as a shepherd those whom he could lead to Christ, though he foresaw that such a course must make him a sharer in the lonely and painful death of his Master. The freedom and joyousness of childhood and youth were past, and henceforward he was to be a preacher of righteousness, constrained by the love of Christ to encounter danger and scorn, and we may well believe, according to the ancient legend, that the vision of the crucified strengthened him for the last conflict; and while he was nailed to the cross sweet scenes of his early home rose in his memory, and he heard once more the voice of Jesus soothing his sorrow, and saw the rapt faces of disciples as they listened to the immortal words of the great Teacher. So the Apostle passes from our sight, and while we drop a tear for his frailty, we would warm ourselves at the fire of his ardent and loving heart, and remember, as doubtless he remembered, how the gentleness of Jesus had made him great.

Ὅτε ἦς νεώτερος . . . ὅταν δὲ γηράσῃς.

(When thou wast young . . . when thou shalt be old.)

Dear home of my childhood, how plainly before me  
Rise visions of joys and of sorrows long dead,  
And yearnings for loved ones departed steal o'er me,  
And sweetly sad thoughts of the days that are fled.

O home of my childhood, I ne'er can forget thee;  
Midst scenes of thy beauty fond memory strays;  
The loveliness shed o'er the world will not let thee  
Fade away in cold mist from my lingering gaze.

For when on the spring-time's fresh verdure I ponder,  
And look on the wonders of mountain and sea,  
I seem in the ways of my childhood to wander,  
And in all I behold I am thinking of thee.

And often some soft strain of music reminds me  
Of rooms once familiar, and warm with delight,  
And rouses once more the affection that binds me  
To friends of my childhood now passed from my sight.

They gather around me ; I hear their loved voices :  
I see them again, as I saw them of old ;  
I feel their embrace, and my bosom rejoices ;  
But ah ! they are gone, as a tale that is told.

They have passed from my view ; but I weep not in sadness ;  
Hope comes with her promise of heavenly birth ;  
And angels appear, robed in garments of gladness ;  
I see them, the friends that I loved upon earth.

And so, while the shadows of evening are falling,  
And I seek for bright jewels in memory's store,  
I listen to voices of dearest friends calling  
To join them where parting and tears are no more.

## SOLILOQUY OF THE EVANGELIST AFTER THE CRUCIFIXION.

Ὑμεῖς λυπηθήσεσθε, ἀλλ' ἡ λύπη ὑμῶν εἰς χαρὰν γενήσεται.

(Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.)

Gone ! gone ! and lonely, lonely is my heart,  
And now I sit alone with grief, and feel  
How keen the pain of parting. O my Life,  
My Love, how empty seems the world to me  
Now thou art gone. I sit alone with grief,  
And drop sad tears. I would have died for thee,  
As thou didst die for me, beloved friend.  
Oh ! my heart aches to think that not again

Thy voice of love may breathe its tender spell  
Upon my warring passions, or thy hand  
Lay its kind pressure upon mine, and curb  
My too impetuous will. Alone with grief  
I sit, and meditate on joyful days  
For ever past, when love, till then unknown,  
Stole gently to my heart, and life from God  
Filled my rapt soul, while faith's aspiring flame  
Carried my thoughts aloft, and robed the world  
In light ethereal, changing the dull earth  
Into a temple where men walk with God.  
But thou art gone : I weep in lonely grief.  
And yet I cannot feel that I am left  
To weep in lone despair. A holy peace  
Steals o'er the anguish of my heart, a peace  
That flows from thee. And though I see thee not,  
Nor hear thy voice, thy spirit's trustful calm,  
In glad acceptance of the Father's will,  
Visits my troubled mind, and o'er the storm  
Of clouded sorrow brings a lulling breath,  
And bids the tumult of resentment change  
To sweet forgiveness. O beloved friend,  
Thou comest in strange visions of the soul ;  
Thou speakest still within my longing heart ;  
And while I bow alone in anguished prayer  
I feel thee here ; I know thou art not dead,  
But raised to life immortal, whence thy power  
Shall issue forth to rule the waiting world,  
And conquer all that severs man from God.  
I see thy inmost heart as ne'er before,  
Though I have loved thee, oh ! how deeply loved ;  
But even love beheld not all that lay  
Behind the fleshly veil, and hidden deeps  
Were fathomless to my imperfect thought.  
But now the veil of sense has passed away,  
And I, awaked from earthly dreams, discern  
Nought but the soul's immortal loveliness.  
So thou art gone ; but love's unbroken chain

Still draws thee to the world, and thou dost come  
To dwell within my heart, and chase the gloom  
Of these sad lonely hours. Forgive my grief,  
For thou didst tell us to rejoice when thou,  
Submissive to the Father's holy will,  
Hast passed triumphant through the scorn and pain,  
And entered that bright world, where God will wipe  
All tears away, and death shall be no more.  
Now may my heart be filled with holy joy,  
And may the Spirit teach me all the truth,  
And bring me revelations clear, and lead  
My wandering steps to those blest shores where pearls  
Of priceless worth await the seeking soul.  
And, O Beloved, may it be my task  
To make thee known, and draw aside the veil  
From the full glory of thy truth and grace.

## GLORIFY THY NAME.

O God, immortal Spirit, only wise,  
Raised far above man's highest speech or thought,  
Invisible for aye to human eyes,  
And yet by man's aspiring soul long sought.  
In figures only can we speak of thee,  
Sublime in lonely majesty ;  
For thou transcendest all our seeing,  
Unsearchable abyss of Being.  
The boundless regions of unpeopled space  
Are thy vast dwelling-place ;  
And seated on thy star-encircled throne,  
Thou reignest God alone.

## **Glorify Thy Name**

Yet through the dimness we discern stray gleams  
That come subdued from thy too dazzling light.  
For in thy varied works reflected beams  
Reveal thy splendours to our fainting sight.  
And in ourselves there is a wondrous shrine  
Where thou dost whisper words Divine,  
And givest revelations holy,  
To yearning hearts made pure and lowly.  
There love and justice, truth and wisdom stand,  
Thine own angelic band.  
Such visions bright Thou dost to men allow,  
The great Revealer, Thou.

And what are we but creatures of thy will,  
Our life a vivid spark that flashed from thee,  
And all our love and wisdom but a rill  
From Being's fathomless and shoreless sea?  
How vain to call our own ambition's crown.  
Before thy throne we cast it down.  
For us there is no regal beauty  
Save reverent deeds of love and duty.  
Then, Father, glorify in us thy name;  
Preserve from sin and shame.  
From thy enfolding Love we ne'er can part,  
O Dweller in the heart.







